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### VISION

#### *WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE*

A community setting which is unique and liveable, prosperous and sustainable, where people of all ages and characteristics have sufficient opportunities to satisfy lifestyle choices, where people are welcomed, have a sense of belonging, their individuality and diversity is appreciated and their opinions count.

### MISSION

#### *THE BUSINESS WE ARE IN*

To provide community leadership in representing community needs and interests

To enhance the safety and well being of the community by ensuring that quality services are provided to the community at competitive cost in response to demonstrated need

To enhance and diversify the municipality's cultural and socio economic position

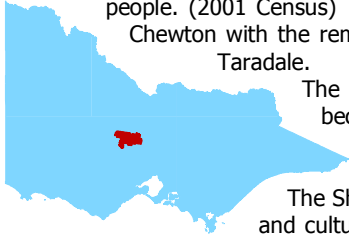
To preserve, protect and restore the built and natural environment

To build productive partnerships with residents, community organisations, industry and business representatives and other levels of government

To maintain and improve the municipality's assets.

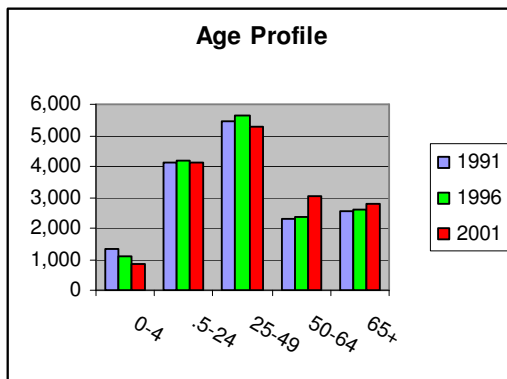
## MUNICIPAL PROFILE

Mount Alexander Shire is situated 120km north-west of Melbourne and is home to approximately 16,141 people. (2001 Census) The majority of residents live in Castlemaine, Campbells Creek and Chewton with the remainder residing mainly in Guilford, Harcourt, Maldon, Newstead and Taradale.

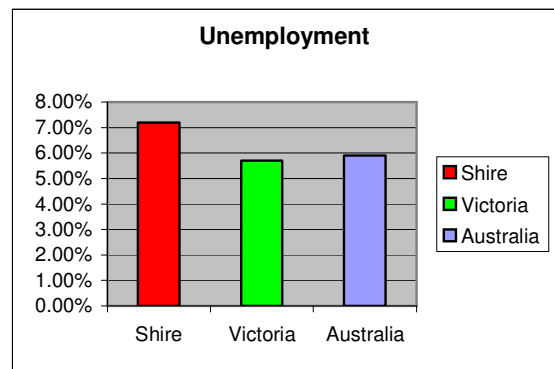


The population is expected to grow to 19,934 by 2021. The Shire is becoming incorporated into the Melbourne commuter range because of its reasonably priced housing relative to the costs of Melbourne property and its rail and road links to the city.

The Shire is a most desirable place to live offering a wide variety of lifestyle and cultural experiences. Consequently, the Shire is currently experiencing a housing boom reflected in jobs growth in related service areas.



Source: ABS 2001 Census



Source: Small Area Labour Market March Quarter 2004

The population of the Shire has a lower percentage of younger residents between the ages of 15 and 44 years than the rest of Victoria and a higher % of residents over 65 than the Victorian average. The country of birth for most residents on Census night was Australia – 86.3%; United Kingdom – 4.3%; New Zealand – 0.8%; and Germany – 0.5%.

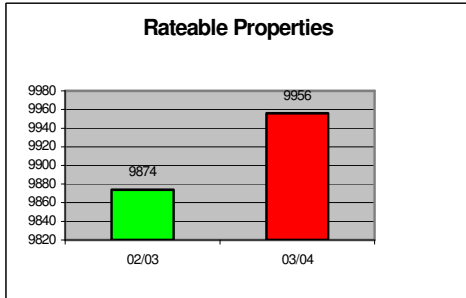
### Current Industry Base

The largest employers are manufacturing (20%), retail (15%), health and community services (13%). Food processing and steel fabrication are the main industries. There are also two prisons and extensive health services for the elderly.

Small businesses consisting of 1-5 staff form the bulk of the retail sector and exceeds the Victorian percentage – 85% Mount Alexander Shire Council compared to 80% Victoria (Census 2001).

	1991 Census	1996 Census	2001 Census
Median Age	36	38	41
Median Weekly individual income	\$40-\$79	\$200-\$299	\$200-\$299
Median Weekly family income	\$200-\$299	\$500-\$599	\$600-\$699
Median Weekly household income	\$160-\$199	\$400-\$499	\$500-\$599
Mean Household size	2.6	2.5	2.4

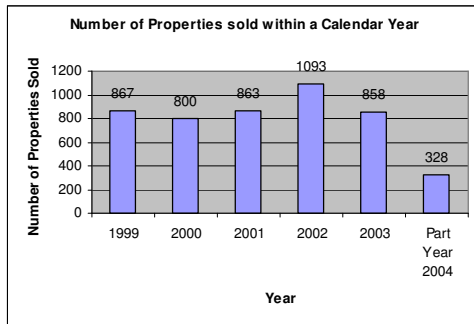
### Rateable Properties



The Shire had 9956 rateable properties in the 2003-2004 financial year compared to 9874 in 2002-2003.

Revaluation of properties occurred in January 2004 and will be used to determine rates in the 2004-2005 financial year.

### Properties Sold Within the Shire in a Calendar Year



The housing boom appears to have peaked in 2002 and begun to decline in 2003.

Note that figures for 2004 calendar year are not for a full Year.

It will be interesting to plot the final figure given interest rate rises over the 2004 year.

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## MAYOR'S MESSAGE

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***Cr Jim Norris, Mayor***  
*Ward: Coliban*

### **Mayor's Message**

The last year has seen Mount Alexander Shire Council continue to grow and develop as one of the most desirable places to live in this State.

It is true to say that we have been "discovered". A stroll down the streets of our larger towns eg. Castlemaine, Maldon and Newstead reflects the changes brought by increased population and increased visitor numbers. No longer is it difficult to find somewhere to have a meal or a cup of coffee on a weekend.

For all this, the Shire still has thriving industrial and rural sectors providing a sound employment basis. All of this is backgrounded by the Box Iron Bark Forests of Central Victoria.

Being a sea change location brings with it many issues. For example, since our last property valuations, approximately two years ago, the average property has risen in value by over 50% with many people now prepared to spend large amounts of money renovating and restoring our built heritage. This in turn has led to development pressures across the Shire.

Council has to find the fine line between development and the prosperity that it brings and the desire of people to retain the values which attracted them to this area in the first place. To this extent, a large amount of work has been undertaken over the last year on the vital strategic planning which will ensure that balance is achieved.

Studies such as the well advanced Happy Valley Moonlight Flat Strategic Study, the Castlemaine Urban Living Study and the Rural Living Study are all examples of the work which will provide guidance for the future development of our Shire over the next 15 to 20 years.

On an economic basis, during the last year, Council has substantially reduced its debt levels whilst further consolidating its reserves and has further moved towards placing the Shire on a sound financial footing for the future.

The Council looks forward to a bright future, based on a sustainable population and the associated economic growth, in harmony with our unique built and natural environment.

**Cr Jim Norris**  
**MAYOR**

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## ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

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**Cr Jim Norris**  
**Mayor 2003**  
**Ward: Coliban**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 BUDA, Calder Highway-Kyneton-Faraday Community Consultative Committee, Elphinstone Community Association, Internal Audit Committee, Metcalfe Community Association, Taradale Community Forum, Taradale Mineral Springs Development Committee



**Cr Elizabeth Eager**  
**Ward: Barker**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 Camp Reserve Committee of Management, Castlemaine Pool Committee, Heritage Advisory Board, Miller Homes Committee, Mt Alexander Community Information Centre Committee, Mt Alexander Bicycle Users Group, Municipal Association of Victoria, Weeds & Streamsides Strategy Reference Board, Mount Alexander Access Group.



**Cr Felix Cappy**  
**Ward: Forest**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 Castlemaine Pool Committee, Contract Selection Committee, Mt Alexander Diggings Management Committee



**Cr Peter Skilbeck**  
**Ward: Loddon**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 Contract Selection Committee, Fire Prevention Committee, Internal Audit Committee, John Powell Reserve-Guildford Committee, Mt Alexander Shire Walks & Trails Development Committee, Heritage Advisory Board, Municipal Emergency Management Committee, Weeds & Streamsides Strategy Reference Board, Housing Advisory Committee



**Cr Robin Taylor**  
**Ward: Campbell**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 Calder Region Waste Management Group, Internal Audit Committee, Mt Alexander Diggings Management Committee, Mt Alexander Local Learning Education Network



**Cr David Gittus**  
**Ward: Tarrengower**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 Baringhup Community Group, Contract Selection Committee, Maldon Australia Day Committee, Maldon Heritage Committee, Maldon Pool Committee, Mt Alexander Shire Arts Board, North Central Goldfields Regional Library Committee

**Cr John Walter** (Pictured right)

**Ward: Calder**  
**Elected: March 2003**  
Committee Membership:  
 BUDA, Calder Highway Improvement Committee, Mt Alexander Shire Arts Board, Youth Advisory Committee, Mount Alexander Walks & Trails Development Committee.



### Creation of Mount Alexander Shire

The Mount Alexander Shire was created on 19 January 1995. The Shire consists of the former City of Castlemaine, the former Shire of Newstead and the major portions of the former Shires of Maldon and Metcalfe.

The internal electoral boundaries of Mount Alexander Shire Council were revised and officially declared in 2002 and took effect for the 2003 municipal elections.

The Shire is currently divided into 7 electoral wards with one Councillor elected by preferential voting to represent each ward.

### Changes to Council Election Legislation

The State Government introduced legislation in the Spring 2003 session of Parliament to establish four year terms of office for Councillors and reintroduced common election dates on the last Saturday in November.

Mount Alexander will hold its next election on the last Saturday in November 2005. All Councils will then go to the polls together for the first time in November 2008 and be elected for a four year term.

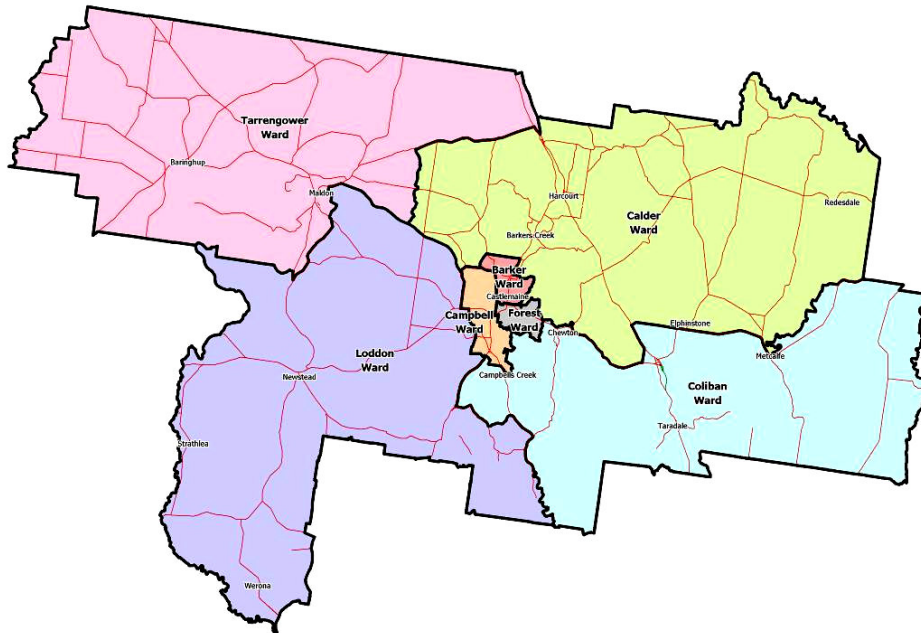
An Electoral Review will occur from October 2004 through to January 2005 to adjust number of electors in Wards in anticipation of new Council elections in November 2005.

Council will go into 'caretaker' mode on 30 September 2005 for a period of 57 days as per the Local Government Act.

### The Council

The current seven Councillors of the Mount Alexander Shire Council were elected in March 2003.

### Ward Map



## GOVERNANCE

### Council Meetings

After reviewing Council meeting practices in neighbouring Shires, Council decided to alter its meeting schedule in order to allow more opportunities for community input. Council introduced an additional meeting time called an 'Agenda Briefing' in January 2004 in order to provide opportunity for members of the public to speak to items on the draft Agenda.

Council 'Ordinary Meetings' are scheduled 12 times each year on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7.30 pm with the exception of the December meeting which is held on the second Tuesday of the month. Special Council meetings are arranged from time to time and advertised in the public notice section of the local newspapers, or a notice is placed at the Town Hall, Castlemaine.

Each 'Ordinary Council' Meeting includes an opportunity for general questions from members of the public which are formally noted in the Minutes of the meeting. Other opportunities provided by Council for community input are at 'Deputations' meetings on the first Tuesday of each month.

Members of the public are able to attend any public meeting of the Council including Special Meetings.

Any member of the community wishing to discuss a community issue is welcome to attend and meet with Councillors.

### Councillor Remuneration

The Mayoral annual allowance of \$36,000 and Councillor allowance of \$12,000 are the allowable amounts set by the State Government for shires of the size of Mount Alexander. Council set remuneration levels at a Special Meeting held on 19 March 2003 (when first elected) and 27 May 2004.

### Councillor Attendance at Ordinary and Special Meetings of Council

Councillors are involved in a large number of external and internal committees, involved in issues and discussion meetings with a wide variety of parties, attend events, functions, host municipal visitors and represent their community at political levels. The table below represents the formal part of the role of a Councillor and is the forum in which decisions regarding the direction and the budget of the Shire are made.

### Ordinary and Special Council Meeting Attendance Record

Councillors	Potential Attendances Ordinary Meeting	Attendance	Potential Attendance Special Meetings	Attendance
Cr Jim Norris	12	12	5	5
Cr Peter Skilbeck	12	9	5	4
Cr Felix Cappy	12	12	5	5
Cr Elizabeth Eager	12	12	5	5
Cr David Gittus	12	12	5	5
Cr Robin Taylor	12	11	5	4
Cr John Walter	12	11	5	4

### Citizenship Ceremonies

Mount Alexander Shire Council conducts Citizenship Ceremonies on behalf of the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs. The Mayor conducted 14 citizenship ceremonies during the course of the year with 23 new citizens added to the Shire.

### Environmental Action



The Cities for Climate Protection Programme is a programme for Councils and communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Council successfully completed stages 4 and 5 of the 5 milestone programme.

***International Council for Environmental Initiatives Awarded to Mount Alexander Shire Council for completion of milestone 5***

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## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

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Council has had an Internal Audit Committee since 1997 which comprises Councillors, staff and two independent external members.

- Mr. Peter Spurling – accountant
- Cr. Jim Norris
- Cr. Robin Taylor – Chair from March 2003
- Cr. Peter Skilbeck
- Mr. Ivan Gilbert – Chief Executive Officer
- Mr. Stuart Newey – accountant (FCPA; ABIA; FIIA (Aust.))

The Audit Committee forms a significant part of Council's corporate governance framework providing advice on the effectiveness and efficiency of Council's financial and operational systems.

### **Audit Reports completed during financial year**

- Review of MAETS structure
- Review of Council's Fixed Assets
- Review of Payroll Processes & Procedures
- Statement of Compliance - Emergency Relief
- DOTARS funding of Tourism Master Plan Review
- Review of Central Victorian Health Alliance Processes and Procedures
- Central Victorian Health Alliance Annual Certification
- Internal Audit Plan 2004
- FreeZA Funding and Service Certificate
- VicRoads Compliance Audit & Confidentiality Certificate
- Review of Aussoft Finess Accounting System
- VicRoads Funded Roads Certification
- "Sculpture by the Creek" review
- Review of Payments made to Councillors



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## **ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S MESSAGE**

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***Sandra Wilson***  
***Acting Chief Executive Officer***

### **Overview from the Acting Chief Executive Officer**

There is no doubt that 2003/2004 has been one of the most challenging years for Council and the organisation has had to draw on all its resources to meet these challenges head on. The service reports included in this Annual Report highlight many of the issues we have faced and our response to them.

A number of Council's services are currently undergoing a Best Value Service Review. The benefits of these reviews in continuous improvement will provide benefits to the community for many years to come. These reviews bring benefits in continuous improvement which will flow on to the community for many years. Council's commitment to the establishment of a strong financial planning framework continued and has enabled it to deliver a large works program and supported other development in the community.

The year has seen Council's indebtedness continue to be reduced and it is now at \$4.2 million after payments totalling \$647,512 during the year. While of concern, our \$1.4 million operating deficit reflects the condition of our assets, largely our roads and bridges. Our level of deficit will be reduced over time as required by our Financial Strategic Plan and forward 5 year budget. Some of our assets were re-valued during the year resulting in an increase of \$4.2 million for land and buildings and \$1 million for infrastructure assets.

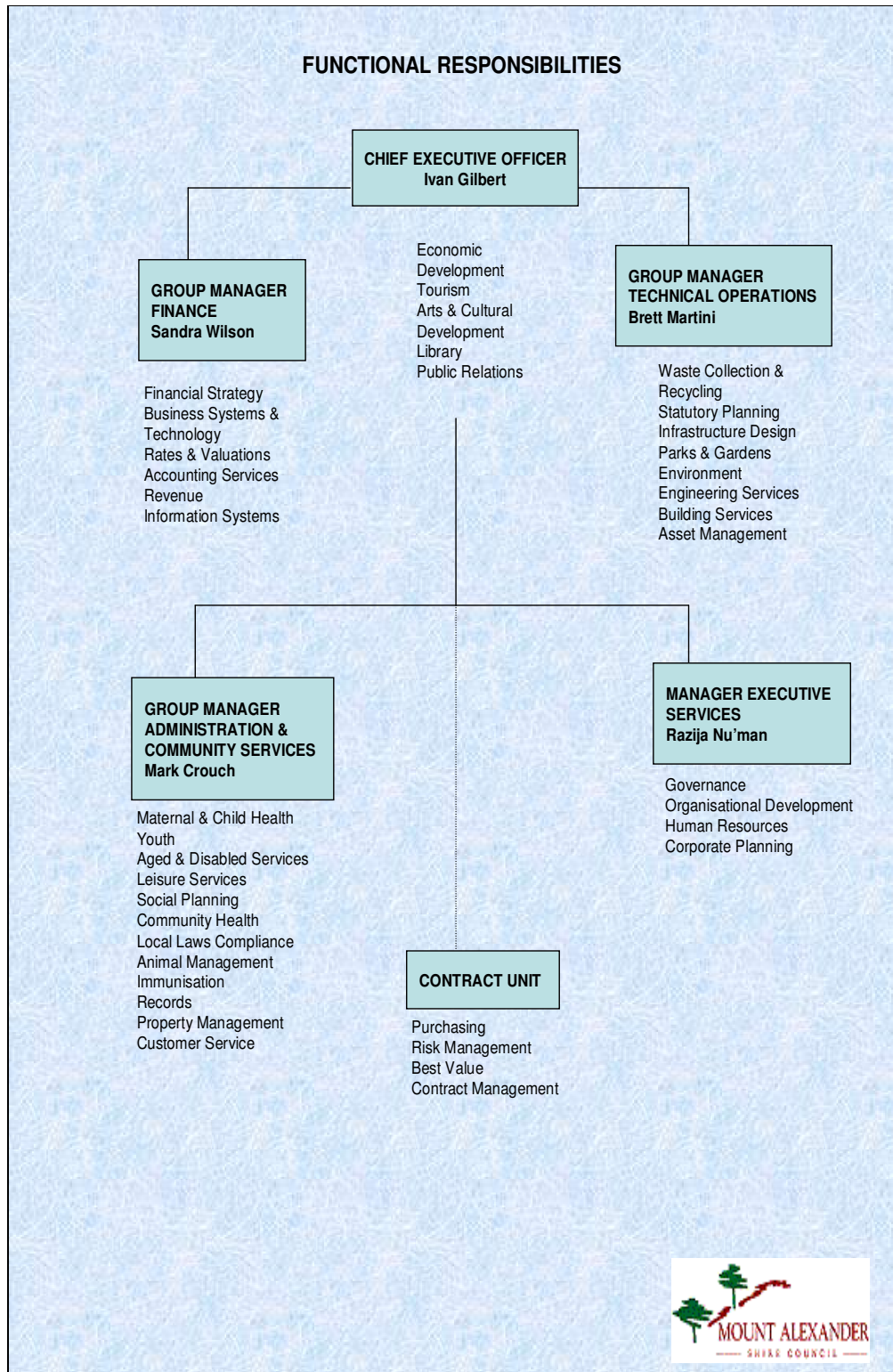
Council was successful in gaining funds towards a wide variety of projects, including Maldon Walking Paths, Historic Places Risk Management, Chewton Urban Design Framework, Weighbridge installation and netball courts, to name just a few. Council looks forward to the refurbished Library and Theatre (\$2.1 million) being opened shortly.

Continuing cost shifting has seen recurrent grants increase by only 1.3% on the previous year leaving Council to stretch its resources to cover the difference between this increase and inflation.

It has been a pleasure to work with a Council that has a strong commitment to the future and working closely with the community to achieve its goals. This positive approach is reflected in our high level of achievement. Council's success depends on the enthusiasm, commitment and innovation of the staff who provide services and I congratulate and thank each one on a very challenging and successful year.

**Sandra Wilson**  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer**

## COUNCIL'S ORGANISATION



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## EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

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**Brett Martini**  
**Group Manager**  
**Technical**  
**Operations**

Qualifications in Civil Engineering (Ballarat University), Post Graduate Diploma in Municipal Engineering and Management (Deakin University). Local Government experience at Shires of Ballarat, Ripon, Pyrenees and Murrindindi. Commenced with Mount Alexander Shire Council in 2001.



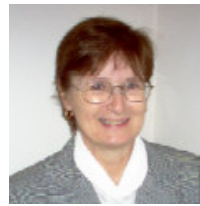
**Mark Crouch**  
**Group Manager**  
**Administration and**  
**Community**  
**Services**

19 years of Local Government experience in financial and administrative roles. Commenced with Mount Alexander Shire Council in 1996.



**Sandra Wilson**  
**Group Manager**  
**Finance and IT**

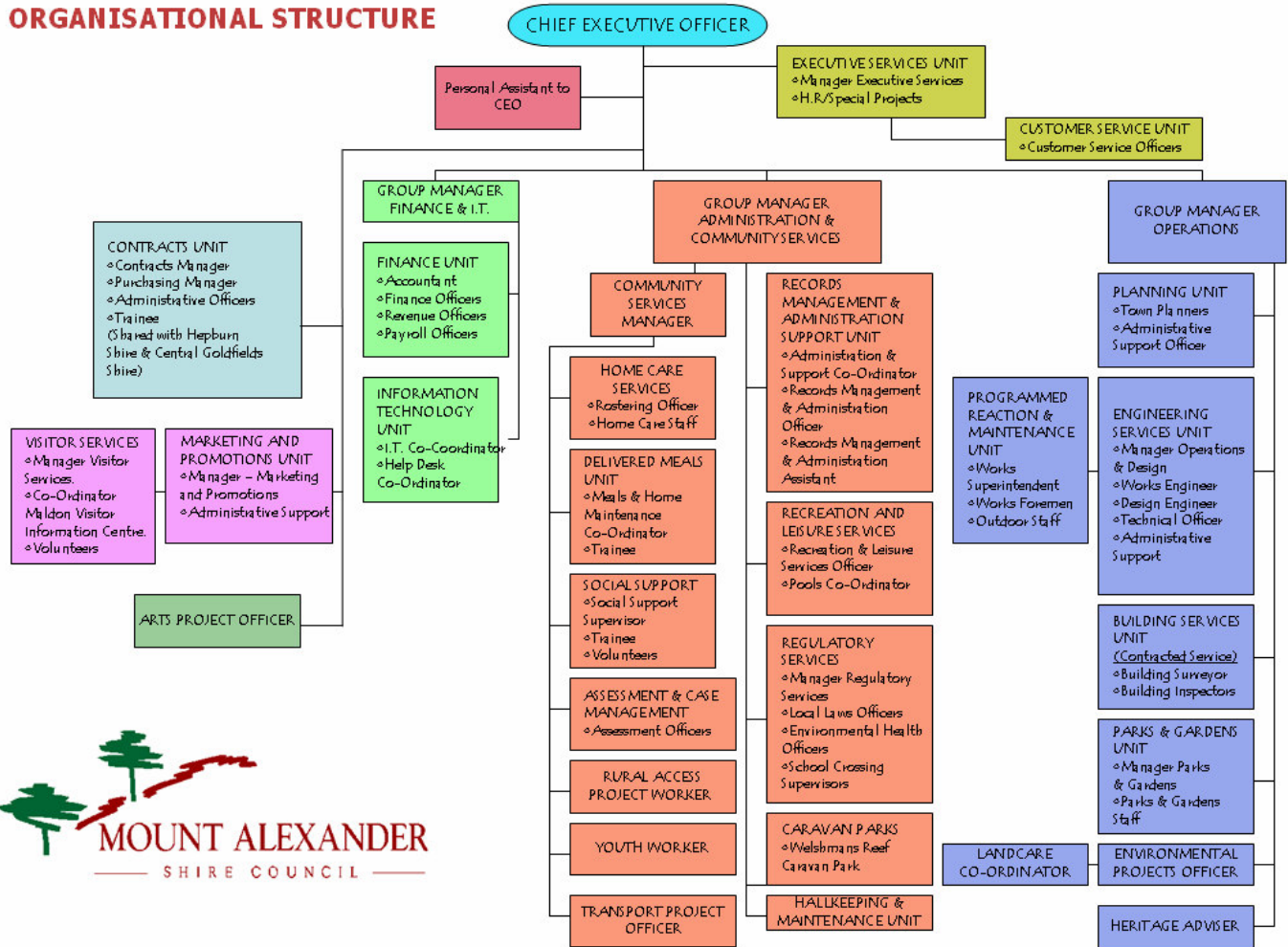
Sandra has worked with the previous City of Maryborough, later Central Goldfields Shire in financial management roles and has 20 years experience in all aspects of Local Government financial management. Fully qualified CPA with qualifications in Accounting (Deakin University) Memberships include Australian Society of CPA's and Local Government Finance Professionals. Commenced with the Shire in 2002.



**Razija Nu'man**  
**Manager Executive**  
**Services**

Razija has worked with Sunshine, Brimbank and Mitchell Councils in Human Services and strategic roles. Has worked in psychiatric, disability and language sectors, and has qualifications in Social Work and Politics, Post Graduate qualifications in Research and Business Management. Commenced with Mount Alexander Shire Council in 2000.

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



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## COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

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### **Group Manager Administration and Community Services**

*Mark Crouch*

#### **Overview**

##### **Recreation and Leisure**

The Shire has made considerable progress with a number of initiatives within Recreation and Leisure Services.

It has been pleasing to see the continuation of the valuable work undertaken by all swimming pool committees of management. These committees are providing valuable services to their communities at the highest standard and safety compliance at a fraction of the cost if Council were to undertake the work using paid workers.

Major works have been undertaken or scheduled for a number of swimming pools. There is an appreciation that for pools to remain viable and be operated responsibly, Council has to invest in and operate pools to appropriate standards. This has proved challenging over the past year, but the community is experiencing the benefits of safe pool operations. All involved are to be commended.



**Harcourt  
Pool  
Retiling**

**October  
2003**



**Harcourt  
Pool**

**November  
2003**

#### **Playgrounds**

Council has also embarked on an extensive program of playground replacement works over the next 6 years. Council responsibilities are increasing in this area, and coupled with sound asset management practices, major playground replacement works have been identified and scheduled for implementation.

#### **Risk Management**

A major challenge for Council will be the fast tracking of a range of program delivery initiatives in the area of risk management, particularly in the area of recreation and leisure. Council needs to work closely with those groups managing recreational facilities on behalf of Council to ensure all practical steps are taken to manage the facilities to the standard expected by the community. This will be a significant ongoing challenge over 2005.

#### **Regulatory Services**

In the area of Regulatory Services, 2004 has been a busy year. Staff have worked closely with the community with a range of responsible pet-ownership initiatives, together with advancements in the areas of pet registration compliance and parking controls, as well as working with traders to ensure suitable arrangements are in place with regard to street and traders advertising furniture.

This year has seen a complete overhaul of the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan. Council has worked closely with the local brigades and the CFA to ensure a plan that is both workable and satisfies regulatory requirements. A roll out of fire prevention plan initiatives in 2004/5 should provide valuable benefits to Shire residents in the minimisation of fire risks.

Council has successfully seen the first full year of operation of the new pound and animal enclosure facility. Council works closely with the local branch of the RSPCA who which, with the assistance of Council, has established and operates the modern and well patronised facility. This facility has replaced a range of fragmented and outdated facilities.

Registered premise inspections and education of traders services continue to pose challenges to Council. Various improvements and service focus enhancements have taken place over the year, however the area is one experiencing heavy regulatory imposts and a backlog of work to be undertaken. This service area requires a close working relationship with business operators to ensure all assistance is provided to promote compliance, and to establish a culture of sound food and premise management.

### **Home and Community Care Services**

In the Home and Community Care (HACC) and other Community Services area, a range of programs continues to ensure our citizens/residents remain at home as long as possible. Council continues to work in close collaboration with the State and the Commonwealth governments together with other community service agencies. The major challenges for this Council in this area relates to the ongoing and appropriate levels of services being provided to our residents, while ensuring all levels of government contribute a fair share of the cost of this service via Council. The major priority is service delivery and ensuring that those in most need receive the service they need. At the same time Council needs to ensure full service by service accountabilities are achieved and that available funds are directed to those services with the highest priority for this community. Detailed service analysis work in this area commenced in 2004, and will continue into 2005.

### **Early Years Services**

In the area of early years services, another sound year has been put in by the Shire Maternal and Child Health Services team. This unit has focused not only on the 'traditional' core early years services, but is now focusing on a range of new initiatives such as parent support programs focusing on the likes of post natal depression, as well as providing a social mechanism for mums to interact and share experiences. Other service initiatives have commenced in 2004 including initial work in the development of a Shire Municipal Early Years Program. This program is to be completed in October 2004. Its primary focus is to ensure a more coordinated delivery of services to our infants within the Shire. Given the broad range of early years service providers and the broad pressure on service systems, there is an urgent need to ensure dialogue and better linkages between providers. The beneficiaries will be our young. 2005 will also see further changes to service delivery with further initiatives designed to meet the needs of those families not currently availing themselves of our services as well bring the service to those more remote parts of the Shire where families are experiencing difficulties in coming into centre based facilities.



### **Taradale Mineral Springs**

The Taradale Mineral Springs redevelopment has steadily progressed over the year. The project is close to completion, and will provide a very attractive and enjoyable facility to Taradale residents and tourists alike. At project completion, nearly \$300,000 worth of improvements will have been achieved for Taradale. The project has experienced its setbacks, but taking into account the upgraded improvements and local community input, the town will be happy with the final outcome.

### **Harcourt North Hall Redevelopment**

The Harcourt North Hall redevelopment has been completed over the past year. This new facility replaces the previous hall on the same site that was destroyed by fire. The new facility is a credit to the local committee and community, and proves in this case 'good can come from the bad'.

### **Property Management**

Property management remains an issue for Council. Limited inroads have been achieved in 2004 with regard to a suitable property inspection regime and systems to facilitate sound asset management. Council property management operations remain very much 'reactionary' with a critical need for management systems to better guide management and Council in its stewardship of property assets. Ongoing property condition assessments are continuing, with Council critically reviewing its current position and what needs to be done to meet these responsibilities.

**Caravan Parks**

Caravan park operations have brought mixed success over the past year. Although water treatment and other works have been completed at the Welshmans Reef Caravan Park facility, low Cairn Curran water storage volumes have detracted from the park. Council struggles with the allocation of the necessary funds to ensure this park operates to a suitable standard.

The Castlemaine Gardens Caravan Park has seen the first full year of operation under lease by the new operators. Development plan works are well underway. The standard of park being experienced by tourists and residents alike has improved significantly from that of past operations. Planning issues and capital works pressure remain, however the park is fast becoming one of which this community can be proud.

**Mark Crouch****Group Manager Administration and Community Services**

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## GETTING AROUND TRANSPORT PROJECT

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### GOAL

Identify ways of making the transport resources existing now in Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander Shires work better for everyone.

### Highlights

- Production and distribution of timetables of public transport services for each of the shires of Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander
- Gaining support and input into the project from transport providers and key community groups across both Shires.
- Input into the strategic planning processes of both shires.
- The development of a travel survey methodology and the beginning of an extensive public consultation process to be completed by the end of 2004.

### Disappointments

- The failure of V/Line to increase the scope of its travel survey has resulted in the getting around transport project to undertake additional surveying.

### Challenges & Priorities

- To identify high priority public transport routes that people will actually use as a start to negotiations with transport providers. In the past Routes have been established as a result of public pressure but have ended up not being used, and thus discontinued. As a result, transport providers are looking for strong indications of likely use before being prepared to consider changes to existing services.





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## **RURAL ACCESS PROGRAM**

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***Castlemaine Library &  
Phee Broadway Theatre***

### **GOAL**

Promote and encourage all Council planning, programs, services, facilities and activities so they include all residents and visitors to the Shire, regardless of disability.

### **Highlights**

- Council has accepted the draft disability action plan called "Better Community Access"
- Some small access changes carried out, for example signs and visibility strips at the Town Hall entrance
- Active and well-attended access group chaired by Councillor Eager continues to meet monthly

### **Disappointments**

- Pace of change is slower than preferred
- Difficulty with obtaining funds to carry out some changes to the built environment

### **Challenges and Priorities**

- To keep access issues before the Council
- To implement "Better Community Access", the Council's disability action plan

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## REGULATORY SERVICES

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### GOAL

To protect human health and amenity through safe, clean, pleasant environments



### Highlights

- Completion of Meningococcal C immunisation program with 900 school student receiving the vaccine
- Successful first year of using the new RSPCA facilities as the Shire Pound and large animal enclosure
- Completion of a Domestic Wastewater Pre-application Information Package which will allow applicants to make better informed choices and more accurate applications for septic systems
- Four additional Sharps disposal boxes installed in public toilets where there were previously none, to reduce the risk to the public
- Adoption of the new Municipal Fire Prevention Plan
- Adoption of a draft Municipal Public Health Plan, entitled the 'Health & Wellbeing Plan'

### Disappointments

- Insufficient staffing to investigate all health complaints in a timely manner
- Delay in implementing the Shire's 'Sharps Audit' in relation to sharps disposal

### Challenges & Priorities

- New Immunisation software becomes available in late 2004. Connecting Maternal & Child Health to the new immunisation software that will become available in late 2004
- Increasing the number of inspections of registered food and other health businesses

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## SCHOOL CROSSING SERVICE

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### GOAL

To provide a school crossing service for the safety and benefit of the community.

### Highlights

- Manual produced for all supervisors setting out the correct operating procedures for each crossing
- Introduced new flashing stop LED signs at Taradale, Harcourt and North School
- Favourable feedback has been received from the police, school communities and the public regarding the new LED signs

### Challenges & Priorities

- The unit will be undertaking the 'Starting Out Safely Programme' for implementation in kindergartens and child care centres throughout the Shire in 2004-2005
- Police and VicRoads will be advising of new updates within the Road Law pertaining to crossings early in 2005
- Will be reviewing Occupational Health and Safety training for supervisors in 2005

### Disappointments

- Three resignations over the year, one of whom completed 17 years continuous service at her crossing

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## CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

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### GOAL

To engage young people to promote their health and well being, positive interaction and involvement in community affairs and access to community facilities and public spaces.

*Maldon Youth Group Meeting 15th July 2004*

### Highlights

- Three strategies from Youth Policy implemented:
  - Maldon Youth Group re-established
  - Maldon Skate Facility erected and maintained
  - Youth section created on Council's website
- High degree of youth participation in strategy implementation
- Successful submission to Recreation Victoria for Skate Park development

### Disappointments

- Lack of resources to implement all Youth Policy strategies

### Challenges and Priorities

- Shortage of youth accommodation (emergency and long term)
- Lack of suitable transport to educational and business places in Bendigo
- Annual Review of Youth Policy

## AGED & DISABILITY SERVICES



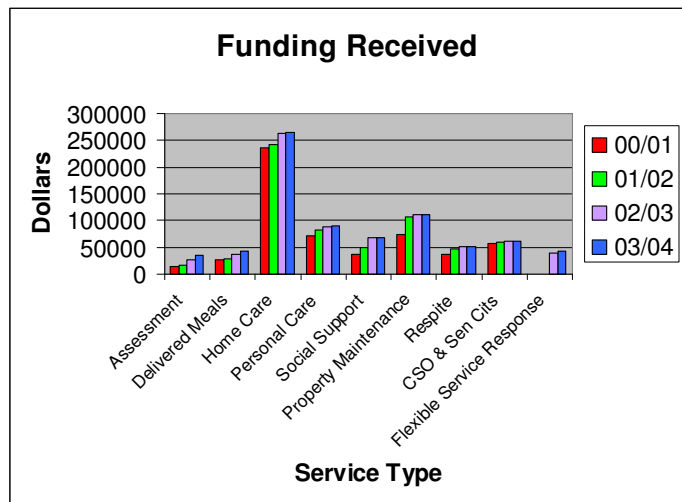
### GOAL

Develop, manage, maintain and enhance the provision of care services to the aged, the disabled and their carers.

### *Home Care in the Mount Alexander Shire Council*

### Highlights

- 12 Seater bus funded by Veterans Affairs
- Extensive range of Social Support activities:
- Telemonitoring
  - Videos on Wheels
  - Magazines on Wheels
  - Books on Wheels
  - Home Visits
  - Scrabble Club
  - Ray Brad Social Day
  - Walk and Talk Tours
  - Diners Club
  - Regular Shoppers
  - Now and Again Shoppers
  - Bendigo Tourers
  - Day Trippers
  - Weekend Wanderers
  - Movie Day
  - Sunday Picnic Day
  - Wednesday Picnic Group
  - Historical Talk Group
  - Aquatic Group (Hepburn Spa)
- In partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, gained funding for a three year project to improve community transport links
- Completed Disability Action Plan
- Access Audits of 12 Council properties and facilities
- Expansion of Immediate Response Service



### Disappointments

- Shire remained lowest funded Council in the region for HACC services

### Challenges and Priorities

- The writing of an Aged & Disability Services Plan, to enable a more effective response to the growing numbers of older people in the community
- Action on the issues highlighted by the Access Audit
- Increase in number of volunteers for Social Support programme

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## EARLY YEARS SERVICES

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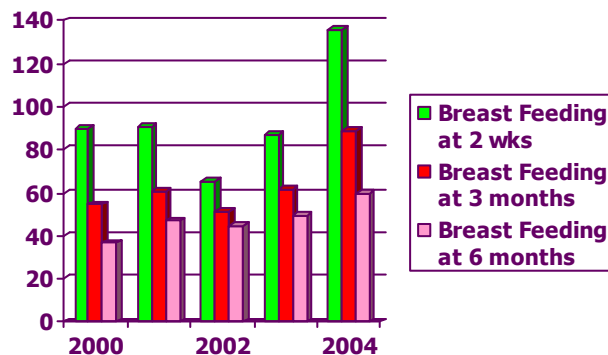
### GOAL

The framework for provision of the Maternal and Child Health Service is guided by health goals contained in the 'Health of Young Australians'. These goals are to:

- Reduce the frequency of premature mortality.
- Reduce the impact of disability, reduce the occurrence and normalise life of those with disability.
- Reduce the incidence of vaccine preventable diseases.
- Reduce the impact of conditions occurring in adulthood, which have their origins or early manifestations in early childhood or adolescence.
- Enhance family and social functioning.

### Highlights

- The building of stronger links with other community agencies that provide services to the family, driven by the process of developing the Municipal Early Years Program (MEYP).
- The commencement of a Postnatal Disorder protocol for the shire to improve outcomes for MCH clients. This project is ongoing.
- Co-facilitating a parenting group with the Family Support Service.
- Instigating monthly immunisation sessions at the centre.
- Employment of new permanent and relieving staff.



### Disappointments

- Attendances for certain key developmental checks still not high (state-wide trend).

### Challenges

- To further develop clients with clients and other stakeholders.
- To complete the Municipal Early Years Program and implement the outcomes.
- To refine and improve the Postnatal Disorder protocol.
- Increase attendance for the key ages and stages assessments.
- To investigate ways of making our practice more gender inclusive.
- To meet the demands of an increasing birth rate with existing staffing levels.



***Maternal and Child Health Centre – Castlemaine***

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## RECREATION AND LEISURE

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### GOAL

To promote and ensure the availability of passive and active recreational opportunities, facilities and programs that encourage healthy lifestyles.

### Highlights

- The completion of a filtration / plant upgrade at Castlemaine Swimming Pool.
- The re-painting and re-tiling of Harcourt Swimming Pool.
- The involvement of approximately 175 volunteers in the operations of the Shire's swimming pools.
- The receipt of \$239,493.00 in funding (via 2004/2005 Community Facility Funding - Better Pools Category) for the refurbishment / replacement of Castlemaine Swimming Pool's shell and associated piping infrastructure.
- The receipt of \$49,750.00 in funding (via 2004/2005 Community Facility Funding – Minor Facilities Category) for the redevelopment of the skate park at Western Reserve (Castlemaine)
- The installation of groundwater bores at Camp Reserve (Castlemaine) and Bill Woodfull Reserve (Maldon).
- The receipt of \$13,485.00 in funding (via Country Football Grounds Assistance Program) for the installation of a groundwater bore at Newstead Recreation Reserve.
- The construction of a netball court at Campbells Creek Recreation Reserve. This facility was constructed with financial assistance from the Victorian Government.
- The revision of the Playground Replacement and Development Strategy.
- The installation of a playground on land adjacent to the Elphinstone Post Office.
- Having Mr John Blackman as a guest speaker at the Mount Alexander Shire 2004 Australia Day celebrations.
- The presentation of the Mount Alexander Shire 2004 Australia Day Awards:
  - Young Citizen of the Year Award: Ms Hannah Dannatt.
  - Citizen of the Year Award: Mrs Shirley Little.
  - Community Event of the Year Award: 75 Years of Swimming in Harcourt.
  - Community Service Award: Castlemaine Highland Pipe Band.
- The many improvements that the new Lessee's of Castlemaine Gardens Caravan Park have made during the first year of their Lease Agreement.
- The removal of asbestos roofing materials from 2 amenity blocks at Castlemaine Gardens Caravan Park.
- The receipt of funding from VicHealth to conduct first aid training for 20 volunteers from various not-for-profit organisations.
- The receipt of funding from the Victorian Aquatic Industry Council to conduct water safety awareness workshops at various primary schools throughout the Shire during 'Water Safety Week'.
- The receipt of funding from the Department of Sustainability and Environment to undertake dead wood removal from trees at Guildford Saddle Club Reserve and Camp Reserve (Castlemaine).



***Castlemaine Swimming Pool  
Filtration Upgrade***



***Campbells Creek Recreation Reserve  
Netball Courts***

### **Disappointments**

- The delays experienced with the completion of the project specifications for the Campbells Creek Swimming Pool redevelopment.
- The need to introduce usage restrictions for playing surfaces due to the extremely dry conditions, and the subsequent impacts that such usage restrictions had on local football / netball / soccer clubs.
- The delays experienced in the opening of Castlemaine Swimming Pool for the 2003/2004 Season due to problems with the supply of various materials.
- Being unsuccessful in obtaining funding (via 2004/2005 Community Facility Funding – Minor Facilities Category) for the resurfacing of the tennis courts at Harcourt Recreation Reserve.

### **Challenges and Priorities**

- Compliance with the ever-increasing demands of playground, playing surface and swimming pool insurance audits.
- The ever-increasing demands placed on volunteers' time and energy.
- The development of Asset Management Plans for all of Council's recreation and leisure assets.
- The completion of a number of significant projects including:
  - the construction of a new amenities block at Chewton Soldiers' Memorial Park
  - the construction of a shared walking / cycling path between Campbells Creek and Castlemaine.
  - the redevelopment of the skate park at Western Reserve (Castlemaine).
  - the redevelopment of Campbells Creek Swimming Pool.
  - the refurbishment / replacement of Castlemaine Swimming Pool's shell and associated piping infrastructure.
  - the upgrade of the filtration / plant equipment at Harcourt Swimming Pool and Chewton Swimming Pool.
  - the repair of a major leak in the return line at Maldon Swimming Pool.
  - the removal of the shingles from Castlemaine War Memorial Stadium and its subsequent recladding with alternative materials.



***Harcourt Swimming Pool***

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## ARTS AND CULTURE

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### GOAL

To encourage a range of leisure and cultural facilities and activities to meet the diverse needs of people of all ages and interests.



***Sculpture by the Creek Project***  
***Photo: Julie Millowick***



***A Mothers Seating Place***  
***Design: Trish Sharky***  
***Photo: Broderwick Smith***

### Highlights

- Local theatre company Barking Owl Theatre to work with older people in the Shire to write a play about love, funded by the Office for Senior Victorians, to change community attitudes to aging by putting older people in the spot light.
- Establishment of the Cultural Assets Network, made up of the Shire's peak arts organizations, to enable better communication and relationship between arts organizations and the Shire.
- Establishment of Castlemaine Phee Broadway Theatre Committee of Management

### Disappointments

The development of Council's public art policy delayed due to greater hours required for project management



***Skipping Girl***  
***Artist: Russell Petherbridge***  
***Photo: Julie Millowick***

### Changes & Priorities

Continue to build the profile of arts and culture to the wider community.



***Mayor Jim Norris and Anton Hassel***  
***Sculpture by the Creek Project***  
***Photo: Julie Millowick***



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## DEVELOPING THE SHIRE

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### **Group Manager Technical Operations**

***Brett Martini***

#### **Overview**

The focus on the strategic vision of the Shire has continued over the past 12 months.

- The program of strategic planning studies has continued with the development of the Rural Living Strategy and the Urban Living Strategy for the Shire. These studies have been undertaken to ensure that the development pressure that is increasing in the Shire is managed in a sustainable and co-ordinated manner. These strategies have undergone broad public consultation and Council can adopt the final documents. This will lead to planning scheme amendments to incorporate the documents into the planning scheme followed by planning scheme amendments for individual locations.
- A number of other strategic planning studies have been completed or are near completion. These include;
  - The Newstead Heritage Study
  - The Castlemaine Railway Precinct Masterplan
  - The Maldon Urban Design Framework.
- The continued implementation of reticulated sewerage throughout many urban areas of the Shire has and will continue to place additional development pressure on these areas. This has been addressed in part by the development of the studies above and the commencement of the Chewton Urban Design Framework in the coming year.
- Improvements in management of Council infrastructure have continued along with Council's involvement in the state-wide "Step" asset management program. Asset management strategies are currently being developed for Council's entire major infrastructure.
- Development within the Shire continues to be strong. Planning and Building applications continue to increase as they have done over the past few years. This has led to additional resources being provided in this area to meet the demand as well as increasing the importance of the planning scheme review highlighted above.
- Considerable resources have been required for Council to prepare for the changing legislation in relation to road management. The introduction of the Road Management Act has seen greater emphasis placed on risk management and formalizing Council's proactive inspection of roads and bridges.
- The continuing drought placed pressure on Council's services and required innovative ways to deal with this issue. However changing management practices and water restrictions due to the ongoing drought meant that gravel road maintenance and parks and gardens services were restricted and a lower level of service provided compared with previous years.
- A number of significant projects were completed including
  - Replacement of significant sections of open stone drains in Main Street, Maldon
  - Rehabilitation of the footpath in Campbell Street, Castlemaine
  - Reconstruction of two sections of Farnsworth Street, Castlemaine
  - Reconstruction of 1km of Reservoir Road, Harcourt
  - Reconstruction of Eastville Road
- Council continued its emphasis on renewing existing assets through the continued commitment to the gravel road resheeting program and resealing of sealed roads.

**Brett Martini**

**Group Manager Technical Operations**

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## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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### LAND USE PLANNING

#### GOAL

To provide a flexible and professional approach to the implementation of the planning scheme in accordance with the Shire's overall land use requirements.

#### Highlights

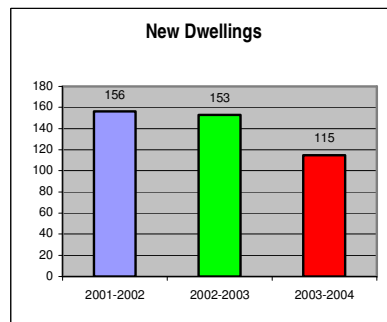
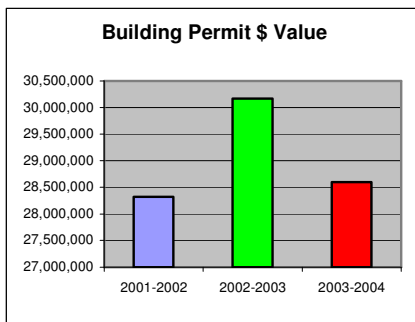
- The Maldon Urban Design framework has been on public display with a number of submissions received.
- There has been a sustained increase in planning permit applications and planning related enquiries reflecting the attractive environment the Shire has to offer.
- Councils Rural Living Study is nearing completion and will be adopted by Council shortly. This strategic document will provide criteria against which future rural living proposals will be assessed. As part of the development of the study a number of rural living proposals have been presented which will be incorporated into a planning scheme amendment.
- The development of a Masterplan for the Castlemaine Railway Precinct has been undertaken. The Plan has been through a program of consultation including public submissions. A final plan will be presented to Council for adoption.
- The Urban Living Strategy for the Shire has been completed following broad consultation including public meetings in all major townships.
- The Newstead Heritage Study has been completed and will be presented to Council for adoption.

#### Disappointments

- It has become apparent that a large section of the Heritage Overlay is inaccurate and will require a comprehensive review to correct.
- Because of the large number of applications it has not been possible to pursue as many planning scheme amendments as desired

#### Challenges & Priorities

- Implementation of the current and new planning studies including planning scheme amendments
- Continuing to improve the time lines for planning approvals
- Updating and correcting the planning scheme
- Review and amendment of the Municipal Strategic Statement



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## ENGINEERING SERVICES

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### GOAL

To responsibly manage, maintain and enhance the Shire's physical infrastructure for the benefit of the community.

### Highlights

- The installation of a weighbridge at the Castlemaine landfill to assist in the reporting requirements of the Environmental Protection Authority.
- The successful drafting of a road safety strategy received by Council, which incorporates many concerns raised through workshops with various community groups, and recommends various staged treatments to these concerns.
- Undertaking several road rehabilitation projects utilising internal resources. This has enabled the team to build upon existing experience and expertise whilst delivering Council's part of the capital works program. This program was able to treat some 10,800 m<sup>2</sup> of the road network.
- Continuing with Council's ongoing footpath replacement program.
- Continuing with Council's progressive program for gravel road resheeting.
- The replacement of Road Bridge in Golden Point Road, which was subject to a 2 tonne load limit prior to the capital improvement works.



***Placing  
Precast  
deck on  
Golden Point  
Road bridge***



***Routine  
Maintenance  
Grading***

- In general, the successful delivery of the infrastructure maintenance program, within limitations.
- The successful implementation of the restructured Works Superintendent and Foreman's roles, which has brought about a more coordinated and efficient operation.
- The successful trial and subsequent continuation of the reconstruction of the Maldon Stone drains project. This involved the removal and replacing of the existing stones in accordance with heritage advice and addressed more than 200 meters of drain in the township.



***Maldon Stone drains project***



***Sealed road patching***

**Disappointments**

- Delays in the construction of the bridge replacement on Faraday Sutton Grange Road due to contractual issues.
- Not receiving funding for several capital improvement projects.
- Increasing statutory fees imposed on Council by EPA for the operation of the Castlemaine Landfill.
- Once again, drought conditions made gravel road maintenance activities very difficult and the understanding and patience of the general community was appreciated.

**Challenges & Priorities**

- Preparing and implementing the requirements of the new Road Management Act to ensure accountability to the community for appropriate prioritisation of projects.
- Keeping up maintenance and capital replacement works on the physical infrastructure in order to preserve and improve where possible the existing service levels.
- Maintaining compliance with changing design standards, work practices & community expectations.

## PARKS SERVICE

### GOAL

Mount Alexander Shire Council Parks Service will continue to offer an attractive lifestyle to its rate payers and visitors by further enhancing the horticultural services currently provided at Council owned properties and roadsides throughout the municipality.

### Highlights

- Barkers Creek clean up at Castlemaine Botanic Gardens involved weed eradication and re planting of local indigenous native vegetation. This has further improved the appearance of this area
- Tree doctoring at Welshmans Reef and Castlemaine Botanic Gardens Caravan Parks has improved safety to users and enhanced the appearance of trees
- Compliance of tree pruning works under power lines in Castlemaine declared areas. This has reduced the risk of power failure and fire hazards
- Parks Service has planted a total of 240 street trees throughout the Shire. This will develop a uniform tree-lined streetscape
- Upgrading of soft fall at all playgrounds in the Shire will ensure the health and safety of users.
- Town landscaping improvement works at Taradale and Chewton, included earth works, weed removal, installation of paths, and tree planting
- Tree planting in centre square at Elphinstone
- Tree prune Avenue of Honor and replacement of 12 trees at Harcourt
- Re-surfacing of footpaths at Victory Park to improve public safety for users
- Parks Service ensures all work sites have safe traffic control. This ensures safety to road users and Council staff
- Significant Tree Register completed to stage two. Significant trees nominated have now been inspected ready for evaluation and policies to follow.
- Weed removal program and re vegetation works completed at selected Council controlled sites
- Street tree and garden bed watering was completed using bore water
- Playgrounds have been maintained for safe public use
- Installation of playground equipment at Baringhup
- Use of recycled products where possible
- Installation of bore at Camp Reserve
- Surveys on all National Trust trees complete and submitted to the National Trust of Australia. This ensures ongoing protection for the significant trees within the Shire



***Baringhup Playground***



***Taradale Town Entrance Works***

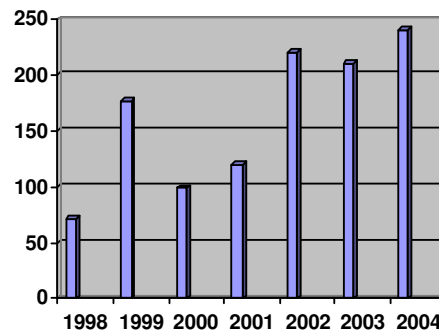
### Disappointments

- Drought conditions causing restraints on selected projects
- Increase of the Elm Leaf Beetle population within the Shire
- Restrictions in place on sports ovals due to drought conditions

### Challenges and Priorities

- Continued improvement and beautification works to all council maintained sites. Works shall include routine maintenance, tree planting, park

***Number Of Trees Planted In Mount Alexander Shire 1998 - 2004***



### Challenges and Priorities (Continued from previous page)

furniture installation, weed removal, mulching, footpath re-development, playground inspections and maintenance

- Continuation of street tree development, maintenance and policies
- Continue landscape improvement works to town entrances in rural townships of the Shire
- Continue weed eradication and native tree planting at Barkers Creek in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens
- Continue to develop stage two of the Significant Tree Register for the Shire
- Meeting required standards for the Line Clearance Act (vegetation clearance around powerlines) in the Castlemaine declared zone
- Improve playing surfaces on sports ovals for safe intended use
- Meeting required water restriction levels at all parks, gardens and reserves (use of bore water)
- Continued staff upskilling and training in their current positions
- Continuation of Occupational Health and Safety in the work place



**CHEWTON TOWN ENTRANCE**  
*Beautification Works Footbridge*



**ELPHINSTONE TOWN SQUARE**  
*Beautification Works*

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## ENVIRONMENT

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### PROTECTING REMNANT VEGETATION

#### GOAL

To develop and implement a program of rate rebates for the conservation of remnant indigenous vegetation on private land.

#### Highlights

- Development and implementation of the rate incentive program.
- 40 applications for the rebate assessed, 30 awaiting assessment.
- The Shire retains 36% of high quality and significant remnant vegetation
- The level of involvement and enthusiasm of participants in conserving biodiversity on their land.



#### Disappointments

- Delays experienced in assessment of applications due to the loss of incumbent project officer and the training of the new officer.

#### Challenges & Priorities

- Providing additional assistance to land owners in order to maximise the management of their remnant vegetation.
- Ensuring the long term sustainability of the remnant rebate program into the future.

## **LANDCARE SUPPORT**

### **GOAL**

To enhance the capacity of Landcare and other community conservation groups to implement their conservation and land management activities and programs.

### **Highlights**

- Successful funding from the Natural Heritage Trust Envirofund for Nuggety Land Protection group \$1200, Taradale Primary School \$4000, Harcourt Valley Landcare group \$4600, for environmental projects.
- State Government 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Landcare grants for bridal creeper control to Newstead Landcare Group and Friends of Campbells Creek.
- Campaspe Valley Landcare group received funding of \$15,000 for gorse control with DPI assistance from Weeds of National Significance Program.
- The development of 4 Landcare Action Plans.

### **Challenges & Priorities**

- Coordinating activities across the Shire in a way which best utilises the limited resources for maximum results.

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION & PARTICIPATION**

### **GOAL**

To increase awareness and involvement of the community in the management of the Shire's natural resources.

### **Highlights**

- Bridal Creeper mapping project.
- Preparation of gorse spider mites brochure for Community groups.
- Castlemaine Environmental Expo; 10 groups participated and more than 300 people attended.
- Development of New Landholders Package.
- Small properties and Landcare management course.
- Salt watch week at local primary schools with over 200 students participating.
- Castlemaine Field Naturalist Group participation in Threatened Species on Roadsides Project.
- Castlemaine North Primary School biodiversity project, with support from Mitre 10 Landcare grant with over 200 students participating.
- Landcare support seminar 20 participants and Landcare funding seminar 25 participants from 10 groups.
- "Is it a native" CD produced in association with Castlemaine Field Naturalist Group.
- Buda Landcare Exhibition and Gardens Festival Landcare Works Tour.



### **Challenges & Priorities**

- To develop a strategic and natural resource management plan for the Shire as a framework for community education and participation.

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## HERITAGE

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### GOAL

To preserve, manage, maintain and promote the Shire's cultural and natural heritage significant places and landscapes.

To protect heritage places from threats by inappropriate development and neglect.

### Highlights

- Conservation of existing character and appearance of significant places
- Negotiated development that is supportive of the heritage significance of places with over 400 appointments made with Council's two Heritage Advisors – one for Maldon and the other for the remainder of the Shire
- Embarked on review of strategic heritage planning
- Completion of the Newstead Heritage Study
- Establishment of a data base of Maldon's heritage assets

### Disappointments

- Demolition of several miners' cottages
- Funding constraints to realise projects

### Challenges and Priorities

- Managing demolition and urban consolidation
- Education & promoting discussion about heritage issues
- Preparation of heritage guidelines
- Implementation of Newstead Heritage Study



*Chewton 1850's miner's cottage*



*Aviary Buda House Castlemaine*



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## TOURISM SERVICES

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### GOAL

To maintain and develop an ongoing focused marketing campaign that positions Castlemaine Maldon and districts as one of Victoria's top 10 destinations and one of the top 3 Goldfields destinations

### Highlights

- Completion and delivery of the 2003/2004 Marketing and Promotions Action Plan
- Continued fostering of relationships with regional neighbours and Goldfields Tourism and used these relationships to cooperatively market the region via hosted journalist familiarisation tours, involvement in tradeshows and securing participation in major marketing campaigns
- Completion of the Castlemaine & Maldon 'Official Visitors Guide' a brochure that integrates the promotion of Shire wide tourism product within one publication and leads the way in adopting the template format of Tourism Victoria's new branding strategy in conjunction with Council's own brand image
- Engaged consultants Asset Interactive to design and develop new tourism based website [www.maldoncastlemaine.com](http://www.maldoncastlemaine.com).

### Disappointments

- Delays associated with completion of the new 'Official Visitors Guide'
- Challenges involved with securing appropriate links between the Shire's website and [www.maldoncastlemaine.com](http://www.maldoncastlemaine.com) and challenges involved with listing content on both sites in a timely manner

### Challenges and Priorities

- To increase operator participation and uptake of developed marketing programs in particular the website and visitors' guide
- To integrate the newly formed Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park formally into all promotional initiatives
- To develop and strengthen key relationships with industry groups and major stakeholders to identify and undertake joint marketing opportunities



### GOAL

To manage first class Visitor Information Centres and deliver high level Visitor Services that continually strive to exceed the expectations of visitors to our region

### Highlights

- Maintained Level 1 Accreditation for the Castlemaine Visitor Information Centre and Level 2 for the Maldon Visitor Information Centre
- Merchandise bases were designed and installed at the Maldon Visitor Information Centre. This enabled the Visitor Information Centre to expand the range and quality of locally produced merchandise
- Oversaw a highly successful exhibition calendar at both Visitor Information Centres
- Improved process of the Mount Alexander Accommodation Booking Service through the development of a new confirmation booking slip in line with developed brand image

### Disappointments

- The inability to upgrade the 'Mount Alexander Diggings Interpretive Centre'
- Although a number of initiatives were trialled, the Mount Alexander Accommodation Booking Service has not yet been successfully introduced at the Maldon Visitor Information Centre

### Challenges and Priorities

- To raise the profile of the Visitor Information Centres in the eyes of local residents and to encourage members of the local community to utilise these resources to access visitor and events information, view local exhibitions and purchase a range of local product

### GOAL

To produce a 5 year Tourism Master Plan that is consultative and community driven

### Highlights

- Engagement of consultants to develop a Five Year Tourism Master Plan
- The involvement of over 300 individuals that included industry stakeholders, events organisers, council representatives and members of the local community in the Master Plan process
- The Master Plan process took the first step toward developing a balanced partnership between the local tourism industry and Shire
- Completion of the Mount Alexander Tourism Master Plan 2004 – 2008

### Disappointments

- Limited attendance at some industry and community consultation sessions

### Challenges and Priorities

- Council's ratification of the formulated Tourism Master Plan
- Implementation of the Tourism Master Plan in a timely manner given the reduced funding and resource allocation of the Unit
- Need to build on the enthusiasm generated throughout the consultation process to continue to drive tourism development
- Need to develop a steering committee to drive the key recommendation of the plan the formation of an Industry Representative Group (IRG)



### GOAL

Assist the Victorian Goldfields Railway in a proactive manner via facilitation, information sharing, cooperative product development and cooperative marketing

### Highlights

- Achieving national exposure of Victorian Goldfields Railway through hosting morning program 'Sunrise' as part of a Goldfields Tourism Initiative
- Worked with the VGR committee to plan for the launch of the completion of the track and the ongoing marketing of the product

### Disappointments

- Completion of link between Maldon and Castlemaine was not achieved in the 2003/2004 financial year

### Challenges and Priorities

- To capitalise on the official opening of the Maldon-Castlemaine rail connection
- To encourage members of the local tourism industry and local community to embrace the completion of the line and cooperate to identify new opportunities



*Victorian Goldfields Railway  
Maldon Railway Station*



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## MOUNT ALEXANDER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE

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### GOAL

To improve the employment prospects of individuals in our communities by:

- Providing employment placement and training programs and services that are highly effective and responsive.
- Developing a strong community awareness of our service and expertise.
- Developing partnerships with relevant stakeholders.
- Encouraging and supporting new job creation and development with business.
- Exploring new opportunities to extend and develop our employment and training services.

### Highlights

- Achieving a 4 star rating in the delivery of Job Network Services (2003-2006) in the Bendigo Employment Services Area
- Providing Job Network Services to 1,763 job seekers
- Placing 558 job seekers into employment
- Delivery of four (six month) Green Corp Projects
- Receiving and accepting an offer to deliver the Jobs Pathway Programme for the period 01/01/04 to 31/12/04
- Involvement in the implementation of the Community Based – Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
- Involvement in the implementation of the School to Industry Liaison Worker for the Goldfields Vocational Education and Training Cluster

### Challenges & Priorities

- To achieve a 5 star rating in the delivery of Job Network Services
- To increase the number of job seekers placed into employment, by further developing our relationships with employers
- To further develop our resources and staff to ensure that we retain our current contracts.
- To expand the scope of registration in the delivery of training.
- To identify future Green Corp projects.
- To increase MAETS standing as a provider of superior customer service
- To maintain a high level of staff quality, motivated by an environment that encourages and rewards input, responsibility and original ideas.
- Being innovative, open to new ideas and anticipating labour market opportunities.
- Networking and participating in relevant forums and committees.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### GOAL

To achieve enhanced organisation performance, support the wellbeing of staff in the quality of their worklife and ensure the fair and equitable treatment of employees in accordance with industrial legislation.

As at 30 June 2004 Council employed a total of 212 employees. This figure includes Mount Alexander Employment and Training Service, seasonal Lifeguards and casual employees. This equates to 135 effective full time positions.

### Turnover

During the year 80 staff left the organization. Of this figure, 24 were seasonal lifeguards. Excluding seasonal lifeguards, this represents a turnover of 26%.

### Employees by Category

	Male Full Time	Female Full Time	Male Part Time	Female Part Time	Male Casual	Female Casual
Professional	5	7	-	8	-	-
Semi Professional	8	5	-	-	-	-
Administration	8	37	2	15	-	-
Outdoor	36	-	7	73	-	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	57	49	9	95	-	2

### Highlights

#### Enterprise Bargain

- A Human Resources/Enterprise Bargaining Committee and two sub committees (Physical Services and HACC) were established as agreed in Enterprise Bargain 3. These two sub committees have met monthly preparing for Enterprise Agreement 4 to be in draft form by December 2004.

#### Customer Service Unit

- A Customer Service Unit was established during the year as the result of an internal review. A review of functions and existing positions, which had a large element of direct customer service in the role, was undertaken. These positions were identified and now report to a Customer Service Team leader.
- A Customer Service Policies and Procedures Manual has been developed which deals with the questions commonly asked of Council staff.
- Staff are constantly upgrading customer service systems and a feedback process has now been implemented to gain feedback from the public and internal customers.

#### Changes to structure/ reviews

- A review of Planning Services was undertaken during the year that resulted in a new full time planner being appointed.
- A review was also conducted of the Regulatory Services Unit which saw a restructure of duties within existing positions and a direct reporting structure of Local Laws and Environment Health to the Group Manager Administration and Community Services.

#### Occupational Health and Safety and Risk Management

- With the resignation of the Risk Manager and the decision of the three original funding Councils (Hepburn Shire, Central Goldfields Shire and Mount Alexander Shire) not to replace the position as a joint position, the function at Mount Alexander Shire was absorbed within existing staffing levels. The functions were split; the external risk managed by the Group Manager Administration and Community Services and the internal component by the Human Resources and Special Projects Officer.
- Risk Management Plans were developed for all units and are still being actioned or reviewed.
- Consultation was undertaken with outdoor staff to develop and implement a Uniform Policy
- Consultation was undertaken with outdoor staff to develop and implement a Heat and Inclement Weather Policy.

#### Equal Employment Opportunity

- An Anti Discrimination, Harassment and Work Place Bullying policy was developed and implemented in July 2003 with education and training conducted for all staff across the

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## **HUMAN RESOURCES (Continued from previous page)**

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organisation. Further training will be conducted in 2004-2005 in order to maintain staff awareness and target new staff members.

All Council's Policies and procedures as they are developed are introduced in line with Equal Opportunity Legislation.

### **Disappointments**

- The turnover rate for Mount Alexander Shire employees is quite high and represents both loss of knowledge as well as an additional cost in terms of recruitment and training.

### **Challenges and Priorities**

- Finalisation of Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 4
- Establishment of the risk function
- Implementation of an internal staff survey

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## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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**Group Manager Finance  
and Information Technology**

*Sandra Wilson*

### **Overview Shire Financial Position**

Council has many demands on funding. This requires strong, long term financial planning and the allocation of scarce resources to programs. This is achieved through the preparation of the Corporate Plan, Long Term Financial Strategic Plan, and 5 year operating and capital budget.

Council's financial position at 30 June 2004 remains sound, reflecting the financial management commitment to financial sustainability which Council has in place.

Council is currently operating at a deficit which indicates that Council is unable to fund the replacement of community assets as they come to the end of their economic life. It is anticipated that this situation will be reversed as a result of a number of actions taken by Council through the 5 year budget and Long Term Financial Strategic Plan, and when implemented, will see Council return a surplus during the 2007/2008 financial year.

Both revenue and expenses for the year exceeded budget. Worth noting are the reasons for employee expenses exceeding budget, namely, employment agency wages budget being included in contractors.

Council achieved a Cash result at the end of the financial year of \$2.6M, \$1M better than budget.

Council's total assets increased by \$3.7M mainly due to an asset revaluation of land and infrastructure assets.

The budget for 2004/2005 maintains financial management as a top priority, with a future focus on increasing the funds available for capital works by provided sound financial planning and decision making.

**Sandra Wilson**  
**Group Manager Finance and Information Technology**

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## **FINANCE UNIT**

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### **GOAL**

Council's Finance Unit is responsible for financial management and reporting, statutory accounting, external audits, the annual budget, rates and property management and cash management.

### **Highlights**

- Continued long term financial strategic plan to provide financial sustainability over the long term
- Reduced interest bearing liabilities by \$647,512

### **Challenges and Priorities**

- Introduce reporting of financial indicators for benchmarking Council's financial performance
- Introduce an operational aspect to enhance financial reporting

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## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

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### **GOAL**

Install Communication link between Town Hall and new Offices at Halford St

### **Highlights**

- Successfully implemented Fibre Optic Cable Link through Bendigo Community Telco.
- Communications link is stable, and has capacity to have speed increased in the future.
- Link carries Voice and Data traffic between sites

### **Disappointments**

- Due to budget constraints, staff were unable to install our own fibre optic cable, which would have been cheaper in the long run, and would have given a much greater speed

### **Challenges & Priorities**

- Because of the limitations of the link, traffic will need to be minimised, and prioritised to alleviate congestion and increase performance.

### **GOAL**

Install new phone system capable of working between the main council sites

### **Highlights**

- Basic functionality of the phone system installed
- There is better communications available now between sites than with the Newstead office

### **Disappointments**

- Due to budget constraints, unable to complete installation, which would have allowed greater customer service delivery

### **Challenges & Priorities**

- Continue to improve phone system to allow reporting and better customer service

### **GOAL**

Replace Financial System

### **Highlights**

- Successfully replaced Financial System with Aussoft's Community system
- Information is now more accessible, and better information can be derived from the new system, allowing better decisions to be made, and more effective service delivery

### **Disappointments**

- Issues with extracting information from old system has made the transition more difficult

### **Challenges & Priorities**

- There is still some sections of the new financial system to implement, and cleaning up of data from the old system will be ongoing.

**GOAL**

To produce an IT Strategy

**Highlights**

- IT Strategy produced and adopted by Council
- Began to implement some of the strategies

**Disappointments**

- Budget has restricted the implementation of some of the things contained within the strategic plan

**Challenges & Priorities**

- PC rollover and standard PC setup is still to be attained



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## CONTRACT SERVICES UNIT

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### GOAL

- Utilise economies of scale associated with contracts and group procurement
- Consolidation of Fleet Wise, Council's fleet management process
- Ensure contract and procurement protocols are followed

### Highlights

- Ongoing procurement and contract savings eg. Negotiation of 35% saving on Finance Software Tender
- Development of Fleet Wise to a level which now manages 40 vehicle fleets throughout Victoria

### Disappointments

- The Unit experienced a fruitful and efficient year

### Challenges & Priorities

- Consolidation of 'Fleet Wise'
- Development and Implementation of a new fleet management system
- Manage the implementation of the web based purchasing system 'StraightBuy'

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## BEST VALUE SUMMARY REPORT

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In 1999, the Victorian Government introduced the Local Government (Best Value Principles Act) requiring Councils to systematically review their services against six best value principles – cost and quality, responsiveness, accessibility, continuous improvement, community consultation and reporting to the community.

Mount Alexander Shire Council completed Strategic Human Resources, Building Services, Customer Service and Statutory Planning Reviews in 2000/2001 and Delivered Meals Service and Maternal and Child Health Reviews in 2003/2004.

The Best Value Report is to be found under separate attachment to this Annual Report.

### Best Value Programme

Service Area	Review Period
Governance, Administration	2004/2005
Social Planning, Regulatory Services, Arts Planning, Children's Services	2004/2005
Community Services Management, Youth and Family Services,	2004/2005
Community Transport Management, Housing Services	2004/2005
Information Technology, Finance	2004/2005
Cleaning Services, Property Management	2004/2005
Environmental Management, Heritage Restoration	2004/2005
Roads and Footpaths, Engineering Services	2004/2005
Marketing and Promotions	2004/2005
Recreation and Leisure, Pool/Caravan Par, Parks and Gardens, Library Services	2004/2005

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAMME STATEMENT  
2003/04**

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The Federal Government allocates money annually to each State for compliance with National Competition Policy and Victoria shares a portion of this funding with Local Government. This requires that Councils comply with NCP requirements, Best Value and Asset Management criteria.

The NCP aspect requires that all significant business activities of the Council take into account competitive advantages and disadvantages of Council when compared to the private sector.

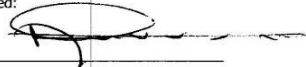
Mount Alexander Shire Council received a competition payment of \$164,915 for compliance with the Victorian Government competitive neutrality requirements in the 03/04 financial year.

A full statement is to be found under separate cover attached to this Annual Report.

I certify that:

- a) this statement has been prepared in accordance with the 2002/03 Local Government Improvement Incentive guidelines issued by the Minister for Local Government (April 2003) for reporting on the following three criteria :- National Competition Policy in accordance with *National Competition Policy and Local Government – A Revised Statement of Victorian Government Policy (January 2002)*, Best Value (Best Value Principles Ministerial Code of Reporting) in accordance with the *Ministerial Code of Reporting Best Value Principles*, as published in the Victoria Government Gazette dated 30 November 2000; and Asset Management (Asset Management Reporting) in accordance with the MAV's STEP program; and
- b) this statement presents fairly the Council's implementation of the National Competition Policy, Best Value Principles and Asset Management Plans.

Signed:



(Chief Executive Officer)

Date: 24.9.03

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## STATUTORY INFORMATION AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION

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The following information is available for inspection at the Shire Offices, 25 Lyttleton Street Castlemaine. In accordance with Section 222 of the Local Government Act, inspection can be arranged by contacting the Executive Services Unit on 54 711 700. Fees may apply.

- (1) Details of current allowances fixed for the Mayor and Councillors under Section 74 or 74A of the Act
- (2) Details of Senior Officers' total salary packages for the current financial year and the previous year including the gross salary, the amount of the Council or employer contribution to superannuation, the value of any motor vehicles provided by the Council and the total value of any other benefits and allowances provided by the Council
- (3) Details of overseas or interstate travel (with the exception of interstate travel by land for less than 3 days) undertaken in an official capacity by Councillors or any member of Council staff in the previous 12 months, including the names of the Councillors or members of Council staff and the date, destination, purpose and total cost of the overseas or interstate travel
- (4) Names of Council officers who were required to submit a return of interest during the financial year and the date the returns were submitted
- (5) Names of Councillors who submitted returns of interest during the financial year and the dates the returns were submitted
- (6) Agendas for and Minutes of Ordinary and Special meetings of Council held in the previous 12 months kept under Section 93 of the Act, except where such Minutes relate to parts of meetings which have been closed to members of the public under Section 89 of the Act
- (7) A list of all Special Committees established by Council and the purpose for which each Committee was established
- (8) A list of all Special Committees established by Council which were abolished or ceased to function during the financial year
- (9) Minutes of meetings of Special Committees established under Section 86 of the Act and held in the previous 12 months, except if the Minutes relate to parts of meetings which have been closed to members of the public under Section 89 of the Act
- (10) Applications for enrolment on the voters' roll under Section 12 and 13 of the Act for the immediate past roll and the next roll being prepared
- (11) Register of Delegations kept under Sections 87, 88 and 98 of the Act
- (12) Submissions received in accordance with Section 223 of the Act during the previous 12 months
- (13) Agreements to establish regional libraries under Section 196 of the Act
- (14) Details of all property, finance and operating leases involving land, buildings, plant, computer equipment or vehicles entered into by the Council as lessor or lessee, including the name of the other party to the lease and the terms and value of the lease
- (15) Register of Authorised Officers appointed under Section 224 of the Act
- (16) List of donations and grants made by the Council during the financial year, including the names of persons or bodies which have received a donation or grant and the amount of each donation or grant
- (17) List of the names of organisations of which the Council was a member during the financial year and details of all membership fees and other amounts and services provided during that year to each organisation by the Council
- (18) List of contracts valued at \$100,000 or more which the Council entered into during the financial year without first engaging in a competitive process and which are not contracts referred to in Section 186(5) of the Act.

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## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

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### **Freedom of Information**

Five requests were received under the Freedom of Information Act for the period 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2004. Four were able to proceed and one failed to reply with further information.

The Act establishes a legally enforceable right for the community to access information from certain records held by Council. Documents under sections seven and eight of the Freedom of Information Act are available to the public.

### **Accessing FOI Information**

Requests for access to documents under the Freedom of Information Act can be lodged with the Freedom of Information Officer, Mount Alexander Shire Council, P.O. Box 185, Castlemaine 3450. A fee of \$20.50 must accompany each application and other fees will apply as the application is processed. On receipt of a request in writing, a decision must be made within 45 days. Where a decision is made to refuse or defer access, the applicant will be notified in writing of the reasons for the refusal and the procedures available to appeal the decision.

General enquiries about lodging an application can be made through contacting the customer service staff on 54 711 700.

Excellent information on the Act can be found on the Government [website www.foi.vic.gov.au](http://www.foi.vic.gov.au)

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## **LOCAL LAWS**

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The following Local Laws were in operation as at 30 June 2004. No amendments were made to Local Laws during the course of the year.

Council currently has in operation the following Local Laws'

Local No. 1 – Meeting Procedures – Regulates proceedings at Council and Committee meetings and controls the use of the Common Seal.

Local No. 2 – Roads and Council Land – Prevents unauthorised changes and damage to Council land or assets and protects the uses of Council land.

Local No. 3 – Environment and Amenity – Protects health and safety of the community.

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## **LEGISLATIVE CHANGES IMPACTING ON OPERATIONS**

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### **Local Government Democratic Reform Act 2003**

The Act received Royal Assent on 9 December 2003. Provisions of the Act come into force at different periods from December 2003 throughout 2004. Provisions that came immediately into force were:

- The new Preamble and Charter
- The alignment of council elections and new election dates
- Independent electoral representation reviews
- Proportional representation in multi-member districts and wards
- Limit on major policy decisions during election periods
- Amended provisions for councilor allowances
- Revised definition of "senior officer"
- Rebates and concessions, and waiver of rates and charges
- Removal of multiple rate capping

From 1<sup>st</sup> February 2004 new Council Plans were to be prepared by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004 and Council Budgets by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2004. Other commencements of interest are the provision allowing affected ratepayers to object to a proposal to levy more than two thirds of total costs; the introduction of Codes of Conduct for Councils and higher degrees of legislated accountabilities for Councillors.

### **Whistleblower Protection Act 2001**

The Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001 came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2002 requiring public bodies to have procedures in place as soon as practicable after that date for the management of whistleblower disclosures.

The purpose of the Act is to encourage and facilitate disclosures of 'improper conduct' by public officers and public bodies; to provide protection for persons making those disclosures and persons who may

suffer reprisals in relation to those disclosures; and to provide for the matters disclosed to be properly investigated and dealt with.

It is a requirement of the Act that Council places its full policy and procedure document into its Annual Report and reports on specific categories. Both these items can be located at the end of the Annual Report.

#### **Information Privacy Act 2000 and Health Records Act**

These Acts protect personal information held by Victorian Government agencies, statutory bodies and Local Councils and companies contracted to provide services. The Information Privacy Act was phased in from 1 September 2001 and became enforceable from 1 September 2002. It covers:

- *Personal information*, information, whether fact or opinion, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion (Information Privacy Act 2000).
- *Personal information*, which relates to an individual's physical, mental and emotional health or disability, palliative or aged care, or health service (Health Records Act 2001).

The Health Records Act was phased in from April 2001 and became enforceable from 1 July 2002.

The Privacy Commissioner is regularly refining interpretation of Privacy by the issuance of a guidelines which can be found on [www.privacy.vic.gov.au](http://www.privacy.vic.gov.au).

Persons wishing to query information held by the Shire or amend their personal information should contact Council's Privacy Officer on 54 711 700 or attend the Shire Offices in order to collect an application form.

#### **Road Management Act**

The State Government initiated a review of road management issues, and introduced legislation that provides clear statements and principles about a road authority's responsibilities – the *Road Management Act 2004*. The Act has significant impact on local government, as well as other road authorities and utilities which maintain infrastructure on roads or carry outworks on roads.

The duties of road authorities will be defined, including the demarcation of responsibility between and among councils, VicRoads and others which maintain infrastructure on roads or carry out works on roads (including rail infrastructure entities) . This is a critical aspect of the Act, as it impacts on the respective liabilities that are imposed on these bodies.

#### **Roads Register**

Councils will be required to keep a roads register of 'public roads' under their administration (ie those roads required for public use). Depending on a council's road network and extent of existing information about it, the compilation and maintenance of a roads register has potential cost implications.

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### **COUNCIL MEMBERSHIPS**

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List of names of organisations of which the Council was a member during the financial year and details of membership fees and services.

Name of Organisation	Membership Fee \$
<b>Municipal Association of Victoria</b>	\$16,000
<b>VECCI</b>	\$1,987
<b>Local Government Managers</b>	\$1,520
<b>CPA Australia</b>	\$462
<b>Local Government Professionals</b>	\$500
<b>Australian Institute of Management</b>	\$217
<b>Institute of Engineers Australia</b>	\$331
<b>Housing Industry Association Ltd</b>	\$67
<b>Australian Human Resource Institute</b>	\$204
<b>Records Management Association</b>	\$200
<b>Finpro</b>	\$132

## COMMUNITY GRANTS PROVIDED BY COUNCIL

<b><u>ORGANISATION</u></b>	<b><u>GRANT/DONATION</u></b>
Regional Library	\$220,780.48
Art Gallery	\$20,000.00
Castlemaine State Festival	\$17,500.00
Camp Reserve Committee of Management	\$14,000.00
Campbells Creek Netball Court	\$13,360.00
Senior Citizens Centre Maldon	\$11,840.00
Castlemaine Pool	\$11,529.95
Wesley Hill Bottom Oval	\$10,000.00
SES	\$9,450.00
Maldon Bill Woodfull Reserve	\$9,000.00
Camp Reserve	\$8,000.00
Senior Citizens Centre Castlemaine	\$7,337.45
Senior Citizens Centre Campbells Creek	\$7,262.00
Senior Citizens Centre Chewton	\$7,261.82
Campbells Creek Recreation Reserve	\$6,500.00
Australia Day	\$6,490.59
Buda Home & Garden	\$6,000.00
CFA & Elphinstone Community	\$5,640.00
Castlemaine & District Continuing Education	\$5,000.00
Chewton Swimming Pool	\$4,733.32
Harcourt Swimming Pool	\$4,579.72
Harcourt Rural Fire Brigade	\$4,500.00
Maldon Fire Brigade	\$4,418.00
Newstead Swimming Pool	\$4,267.50
Maldon Swimming Pool	\$4,199.03
Metcalfe Hall/Office	\$4,000.00
Senior Citizens Centre Newstead	\$3,741.82
Senior Citizens Centre Metcalfe	\$3,740.00
Newstead Community Centre	\$3,500.00
Chewton Community Centre	\$3,000.00
Maldon Community Centre	\$3,000.00
Friends Of Campbells Creek	\$3,000.00
Chewton Memorial Park	\$2,575.00
Castlemaine Town Hall	\$2,500.00
Mount Alexander Golf Club	\$2,500.00
Castlemaine District Agricultural Society	\$2,500.00
Chewton Land Care Group	\$2,500.00
Nuggetty Land Protection Group	\$2,500.00
Sutton Grange Hall Comm.	\$2,429.00
Campbells Creek Community Centre	\$2,209.04
Wesley Hill Stadium	\$2,000.00
Barfold Hall	\$2,000.00
Maldon Tennis Club Inc	\$2,000.00
Loddon Mallee Mobile Pre-School	\$2,000.00
Specimen Gully Land Care Group	\$2,000.00
Golden Point Land Care Group	\$2,000.00
Chewton Domain Society	\$2,000.00
Guildford Recreation Reserve	\$1,850.88
Harcourt North Tennis Club Inc	\$1,800.00

Old C/Maine Courthouse	\$1,750.00
Norwood Hill Reserve	\$1,700.00
Carinya Child Care Centre	\$1,500.00
J Powell Res. (Guildford)	\$1,500.00
Castlemaine Land Care Group	\$1,500.00
Friends Box & Ironbark Forest	\$1,500.00
Campaspe Valley Land Care Group	\$1,500.00
Sutton Grange Land Care Group	\$1,500.00
Harcourt Applefest	\$1,500.00
Maldon Easter Fair Committee	\$1,500.00
Castlemaine Secondary College Chaplaincy	\$1,500.00
Maldon Pre School Centre	\$1,416.00
Harcourt Preschool	\$1,416.00
Newstead Pre-School Association Inc.	\$1,416.00
Castlemaine Steiner School	\$1,416.00
South Castlemaine Kindergarten	\$1,416.00
Berkeley Street Kindergarten	\$1,416.00
Maldon Neighbourhood Centre	\$1,400.00
Newstead Courthouse	\$1,250.00
Maldon Museum/Old Shire Hall	\$1,250.00
Maldon Incorporated	\$1,250.00
Guildford/Upper Loddon Land Care	\$1,200.00
Newstead Land Care Group	\$1,150.00
Metcalfe Community Association	\$1,050.00
Harcourt Leisure Centre	\$1,000.00
Muckleford Public Hall	\$1,000.00
Taradale Recreation Reserve Committee of Management	\$1,000.00
Barkers Creek Hall/Reserve	\$1,000.00
Elphinstone Community Association	\$1,000.00
Harcourt Rec. Reserve	\$1,000.00
Baringhup Community Association	\$1,000.00
Taradale Fire Brigade	\$1,000.00
Castlemaine Soccer Club	\$1,000.00
Flemme Fatales	\$1,000.00
Tara Gilbee	\$1,000.00
Castlemaine Community House	\$1,000.00
Maldon & Baringhup Agricultural Society	\$1,000.00
Focal - Friends Of Castlemaine	\$976.00
Maldon Urban Land Care Group	\$800.00
Newstead Community Centre	\$750.00
Festival Of Gardens	\$750.00
Campbells Creek Track	\$660.00
Friends Of Kalimna Park	\$660.00
Fryerstown Park	\$650.00
Sutton Grange Hall	\$500.00
Land Care Groups - Tip Pass	\$500.00
Elphinstone Rec. Res	\$500.00
Guildford Hall	\$500.00
Taradale Hall	\$500.00
Taradale Community Association	\$500.00
Wesley Hill Hall	\$500.00
Nth Harcourt Hall	\$500.00
Elphinstone Hall	\$500.00
Muckleford Community Centre	\$500.00

Muckleford Rec. Reserve	\$500.00
Maldon Lions Club	\$500.00
Baringhup Hall	\$500.00
Bicycle Users Group	\$500.00
Guildford Saddle Club	\$500.00
Wattle Flat Reserve	\$500.00
Metcalfe Rec Reserve	\$500.00
Castlemaine Radio Control Car	\$500.00
Elphinstone Land Management	\$500.00
Baringhup West Rural Fire	\$500.00
Lockwood Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Walmer Rural Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Woodstock West Rural Fire	\$500.00
Castlemaine Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Chewton Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Elphinstone Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Langley-Barfold Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Metcalfe Rural Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Redesdale Rural Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Taradale Fire Brigade	\$500.00
Sutton Grange & Myrtle Creek	\$500.00
Elphinstone Community Assoc.	\$500.00
Maldon District Camp draft	\$500.00
Baringhup Community Association	\$500.00
Newstead Pony Club	\$500.00
Castlemaine Cycling Club	\$500.00
Castlemaine Uniting Church	\$500.00
Maldon Croquet Club	\$250.00
Bendigo Wine Growers Assoc	\$250.00
Castlemaine Business Assoc.	\$250.00
Maldon Golf Club Inc.	\$150.00



## MEASURING OUR SUCCESS – CORPORATE INDICATORS

### Monitoring of Actions

76 out of 79 Councils Victorian Councils participate in a telephone survey with a statistically representative sample of ratepayers during February and March each year. Where respondents indicated that performance in specific service areas needed improvement, follow up diagnostic questions are asked and additional analysis done. The survey enables councils to monitor their performance over time as well as against their like group of councils.

### Resident and Ratepayer Feedback

Council has a broad community consultation network of both an informal and formal variety such as through a range of advisory bodies. Avenues are created for members of the community to interact with Council on a regular basis about issues, projects and actions in the plan.

Key areas measured through this process are listed in the table below.

### *Annual Community Satisfaction Survey Comparison for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 results and 2005 targets*

<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Target '05</i>	<i>'04</i>	<i>'03</i>	<i>'02</i>	<i>'01</i>	<i>'00</i>	<i>'99</i>
<i>1. Overall Performance of Council</i>	62	61	61	65	61	58	58
<i>2. Overall performance in key service areas and responsibilities</i>	62	61	61	63	61	60	58
<i>3. Community engagement</i>	62	61	60	57			
<i>4. Local roads and footpaths</i>	49	48	48	50	47	46	48
<i>5. Health and human services</i>	72	70	71	71	70	69	68
<i>6. Recreational facilities</i>	56	56	53	66	63	63	63
<i>7. Appearance of public areas</i>	71	70	72	75	71	71	66
<i>8. Traffic management and parking facilities</i>	62	60	58	57	54	59	54
<i>9. Waste management services</i>	71	71	73	65	65	60	54
<i>10. Enforcement of Local Laws</i>	62	62	63	64	62	63	62
<i>11. Economic Development</i>	59	59	59	60	56	54	53
<i>12. Town Planning Policy and approvals</i>	59	56	56	60	62	59	55
<i>13. Interaction and responsiveness with public/customer contact</i>	71	69	69	69	69	67	67
<i>14. Advocacy and community representation</i>	65	64	61	63	60	57	53

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## WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION ACT 2001

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S104 (a)-(j) requires that a public body must report against the following items

The current procedures established by the public body under Part 6	<b>See page 53 for a full copy of Council's policy</b>
The number and types of disclosures made to the public body during the year	Nil
The number of disclosures referred during the year by the public body to the Ombudsman for determination as to whether they are public interest disclosures	Nil
The number and types of disclosed matters referred to the public body during the year by the Ombudsman	Nil
The number and types of disclosed matters referred during the year by the public body to the Ombudsman to investigate	Nil
The number and types of investigations of disclosed matters taken over by the Ombudsman from the public body during the year	Nil
The number of requests made under section 74 during the year to the Ombudsman to investigate disclosed matters	Nil
The number and types of disclosed matters that the public body has declined to investigate during the year	Nil
The number and types of disclosed matters that were substantiated on investigation and the action taken on completion of the investigation	Nil
Any recommendations of the Ombudsman under this Act that relate to the public body.	Nil

**VICTORIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDICATORS**  
**Data Collection 2004**

***Introduction***

The Victorian Government requires the inclusion of the following indicators in each Council's Annual Report. The Government has amended the Local Government Act 1989 (section 153) to ensure that local government develops new performance accountability mechanisms which allows for a consistent approach in the collection and reporting of information regarding financial performance, operating costs and community satisfaction.

The use of indicators by local government is a significant step towards achieving:

- an improved capacity to objectively measure council performance leading to a better set of relationships between state and local government,
- better informed local communities.

***a) Annual Business Plan Targets***

<b>No.</b>	<b>Victorian Local Government Indicators</b>	<b>ACTUAL 2003/2004</b>	<b>TARGET 2003/2004</b>	<b>ACTUAL 2002/03</b>
1	Average rates and charges* per assessment	\$666	\$665	\$630
2	Average rates and charges* per RESIDENTIAL assessment	\$730	\$730	\$681
3	Average operating expenditure per assessment	\$1,872	\$1,760	\$1,947
4	Average capital expenditure per assessment	\$404	\$400	\$230
5	Renewal gap	33%	31%	43%
6	Renewal & maintenance gap	55%	54%	62%
7	Average liabilities per assessment	\$655	\$661	\$732
8	Operating result per assessment	(\$139)	(\$154)	(\$141)

\* NB. Average rates and charges includes garbage charges

**EXPLANATION OF SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES:**

Income from Mount Alexander Employment & Training Service was \$1.43M greater than 2004 Adopted Budget. Conversely, the operating expenses of MAETS was \$1.48M greater than budget. Overall there was negligible cost as the extra expenditure was matched by extra revenue. This equated to \$138 per assessment

3

**b). Annual Community Satisfaction Survey**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>ACTUAL 2003/2004</b>	<b>TARGET 2003/2004</b>
Overall Performance of Council	61	61
Engagement in decision making on key local issues	61	60
Advocacy and community representation on key local issues	64	61

NOTES:

These are an indexed mean of 350 respondents answers in a survey conducted by the independent strategic research consultants Newton Wayman Chong asking respondents to rate Councils performance. The indexed mean is a weighted score across five performance

100 - Excellent/outstanding performance

80 - A good/high standard

60 - Adequate/acceptable

40 - Needs some improvement

20 - Needs a lot of improvement



**MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL  
GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES**

WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION ACT - 2001  
Adopted – January 2002

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## Statement of support to whistleblowers

The **Mount Alexander Shire Council** (“**the Council**”) is committed to the aims and objectives of the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* (“the Act”). It does not tolerate improper conduct by its **councillors or staff**, nor the taking of reprisals against those who come forward to disclose such conduct.

The **Council** recognises the value of transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices, and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, conduct involving a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety or the environment.

The **Council** will take all reasonable steps to protect people who make such disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making the disclosure. It will also take afford natural justice to the person who is the subject of the disclosure.

### 2. Purpose of these procedures

These procedures establish a system for reporting disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by **the Council** or its **employees**. The system enables such disclosures to be made to the protected disclosure coordinator. Disclosures may be made by employees or by members of the public.

These procedures are designed to complement normal communication channels between supervisors and employees. Employees are encouraged to continue to raise appropriate matters at any time with their supervisors. As an alternative, employees may make a disclosure of improper conduct or detrimental action under the Act in accordance with these procedures.

### 3. Objects of the Act

The Act commences operation on 1 January 2002. The purpose of the Act is to encourage and facilitate the making of disclosures of improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Act provides protection to whistleblowers who make disclosures in accordance with the Act, and establishes a system for the matters disclosed to be investigated and rectifying action to be taken.

### 4. Definitions of key terms

Three key concepts in the reporting system are improper conduct, corrupt conduct and detrimental action. Definitions of these terms are set out below.

#### 4.1 Improper conduct

A disclosure may be made about improper conduct by a public body or public official. Improper conduct means conduct that is corrupt, a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving substantial risk to public health or safety or to the environment. The conduct must be serious enough to constitute, if proved, a criminal offence or reasonable grounds for dismissal.

#### *Examples*

*To avoid closure of a town's only industry, an environmental health officer ignores or conceals evidence of illegal dumping of waste.*

*An agricultural officer delays or declines imposing quarantine to allow a financially distressed farmer to sell diseased stock.*

*A building inspector tolerates poor practices and structural defects in the work of a leading local builder.*

#### 4.2 Corrupt conduct

Corrupt conduct means:

- conduct of any person (whether or not a public official) that adversely affects the honest performance of a public officer's or public body's functions;

- the performance of a public officer’s functions dishonestly or with inappropriate partiality;
- conduct of a public officer, former public officer or a public body that amounts to a breach of public trust;
- conduct by a public officer, former public officer or a public body that amounts to the misuse of information or material acquired in the course of the performance of their official functions; or
- a conspiracy or attempt to engage in the above conduct.

**Examples**

*A public officer takes a bribe or receives a payment other than his or her wages or salary in exchange for the discharge of a public duty.*

*A public officer favours unmeritorious applications for jobs or permits by friends and relatives.*

*A public officer sells confidential information.*

**4.3 Detrimental action**

The Act makes it an offence for a person to take detrimental action against a person in reprisal for a protected disclosure. Detrimental action includes:

- action causing injury, loss or damage;
- intimidation or harassment; and
- discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to a person’s employment, career, profession, trade or business, including the taking of disciplinary action.

**Examples**

*A public body refuses a deserved promotion of a person who makes a disclosure.*

*A public body demotes, transfers, isolates in the workplace or changes the duties of a whistleblower due to the making of a disclosure.*

*A person threatens, abuses or carries out other forms of harassment directly or indirectly against the whistleblower, his or her family or friends.*

*A public body discriminates against the whistleblower or his or her family and associates in subsequent applications for jobs, permits or tenders.*

**5. The reporting system**

**5.1 Contact persons within the Mount Alexander Shire Council**

Disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by **the Council** or its **employees**, may be made to: the following officers:

- **The Protected Disclosure Coordinator:**
    - **Razija Nu’man Manager Executive Services Town Hall, 25 Lyttleton St., Castlemaine, 3450 Telephone: 54711706, r.numan@mountalexander.vic.gov.au**
- or in her absence, disclosures can be made to
- **Caroline Corney Senior Administrative Officer, 25 Lyttleton St., Castlemaine, 3450 Telephone: 54711732 c.corney@mountalexander.vic.gov.au**



All correspondence, phone calls and e-mails from internal or external whistleblowers will be referred to the Protected Disclosure Coordinator.

Where a person is contemplating making a disclosure and is concerned about approaching the Protected Disclosure Coordinator in the workplace, he or she can call the officer and request a meeting in a discrete location away from the workplace.

## 5.2 Alternative contact persons

A disclosure about improper conduct or detrimental action by **the Council** or its **employees**, may also be made directly to the Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman Victoria  
 Level 22, 459 Collins Street  
 Melbourne Victoria 3000  
 (DX 210174)  
 Internet: [www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au)  
 Email: [ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au](mailto:ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au)

Tel: 9613 6222  
 Toll Free: 1800 806 314

Ombudsman: Dr Barry Perry Tel: (03) 9613 6202

The following table sets out where disclosures about persons other than employees of the **Council** should be made.

Person who is the subject of the disclosure	Person/body to whom the disclosure must be made
Employee of a public body	That public body or the Ombudsman
Member of Parliament (Legislative Assembly)	Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Member of Parliament (Legislative Council)	President of the Legislative Council
Councillor	The Ombudsman
Chief Commissioner of Police	The Ombudsman or Deputy Ombudsman
Member of the police force	The Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman or Chief Commissioner of Police

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

### 6.1 Employees

Employees are encouraged to report known or suspected incidences of improper conduct or detrimental action in accordance with these procedures.

All employees of the **Council** have an important role to play in supporting those who have made a legitimate disclosure. They must refrain from any activity that is, or could be perceived to be, victimisation or harassment of a person who makes a disclosure. Furthermore, they should protect and maintain the confidentiality of a person they know or suspect to have made a disclosure.

### 6.2 Protected Disclosure Coordinator

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator has a central 'clearinghouse' role in the internal reporting system. As the disclosure coordinator, Razija Nu'man will:

- receive all disclosures;
- receive all phone calls, emails and letters from members of the public or employees seeking to make a disclosure;
- impartially assess each disclosure to determine whether it is a public interest disclosure;
- refer all public interest disclosures to the Ombudsman;

- be responsible, in discussion with the CEO, for carrying out, or appointing an investigator to carry out, an investigation referred to the **Council** by the Ombudsman;
- Under direction of the CEO, be responsible for overseeing and coordinating an investigation where an investigator has been appointed;
- support the whistleblower and to protect him or her from any reprisals;
- advise the whistleblower of the progress of an investigation into the disclosed matter;
- establish and manage a confidential filing system;
- collate and publish statistics on disclosures made;
- take all necessary steps to ensure the identity of the whistleblower and the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure are kept confidential;
- examine the immediate welfare and protection needs of a whistleblower who has made a disclosure and seek to foster a supportive work environment;
- advise the whistleblower of the legislative and administrative protections available to him or her;
- listen and respond to any concerns of harassment, intimidation or victimisation in reprisal for making disclosure;
- ensure the expectations of the whistleblower are realistic;
- liaise with the chief executive officer of the public body.

### 6.3 Investigator

The investigator will be responsible for carrying out an internal investigation into a disclosure where the Ombudsman has referred a matter to the **Council**. An investigator may be a person from within an organisation or a consultant engaged for that purpose.

## 7. Confidentiality

The **Council** will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the whistleblower. Maintaining confidentiality is crucial in ensuring reprisals are not made against a whistleblower.

The Act requires any person who receives information due to the handling or investigation of a protected disclosure, not to disclose that information except in certain limited circumstances. Disclosure of information in breach of section 22 constitutes an offence that is punishable by a maximum fine of 60 penalty units (\$6000) or six months imprisonment or both.

The circumstances in which a person may disclose information obtained about a protected disclosure include:

- where exercising the functions of the public body under the Act;
- when making a report or recommendation under the Act;
- when publishing statistics in the annual report of a public body; and
- in criminal proceedings for certain offences in the Act.

However, the Act prohibits the inclusion of particulars in any report or recommendation that is likely to lead to the identification of the whistleblower. The Act also prohibits the identification of the person who is the subject of the disclosure in any particulars included in an annual report.

The **Council** will ensure all files, whether paper or electronic, are kept in a secure room and can only be accessed by the CEO and Protected Disclosure Coordinator. All printed material will be kept in files that are clearly marked as a Whistleblower Protection Act matter, and warn of the criminal penalties that apply to any unauthorised person divulging information concerning a protected disclosure. All electronic files will be produced and stored **in a non shared directory**

and be given password protection. Backup files will be kept on floppy disc. All materials relevant to an investigation, such as tapes from interviews, will also be stored securely with the whistleblower files.

The **Council** will not email documents relevant to a whistleblower matter and will ensure all phone calls and meetings are conducted in private.

## **8. Collating and publishing statistics**

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will establish a secure register to record the information required to be published in the annual report, and to generally keep account of the status of whistleblower disclosures. The register will be confidential and will not record any information that may identify the whistleblower.

The register will contain the following information:

- the number and types of disclosures made to **the Council** during the year;
- the number of disclosures referred to the Ombudsman for determination as to whether they are public interest disclosures;
- the number and types of disclosed matters referred to the **Council** by the Ombudsman for investigation;
- the number and types of disclosures referred by the **Council** to the Ombudsman for investigation;
- the number and types of investigations taken over from the **Council** by the Ombudsman;
- the number of requests made by a whistleblower to the Ombudsman to take over an investigation by the **Council**;
- the number and types of disclosed matters that the **Council** has declined to investigate;
- the number and types of disclosed matters that were substantiated upon investigation and the action taken on completion of the investigation; and
- any recommendations made by the Ombudsman that relate to the **Council**.

## **9. Receiving and assessing disclosures**

### **9.1 Has the disclosure been made in accordance with Part 2 of the Act?**

Where a disclosure has been received by the protected disclosure coordinator, it will be assessed whether the disclosure has been made in accordance with Part 2 of the Act and is, therefore, a protected disclosure.

#### **9.1.1 Has the disclosure been made to the appropriate person?**

For the disclosure to be responded to by the Council it must concern **a councillor or staff member of the Mount Alexander Shire Council**. If the disclosure concerns an employee, officer or member of another public body, the person who has made the disclosure must be advised of the correct person or body to whom the disclosure should be directed. (See the table in 5.2). If the disclosure has been made anonymously, it should be referred to the Ombudsman.

#### **9.1.2 Does the disclosure contain the essential elements of a protected disclosure?**

To be a protected disclosure, a disclosure must satisfy the following criteria:

- did a natural person (that is, an individual person rather than a corporation) make the disclosure?
- does the disclosure relate to conduct of a public body or public officer acting in their official capacity?
- is the alleged conduct either improper conduct or detrimental action taken against a person in reprisal for making a protected disclosure?
- does the person making a disclosure have reasonable grounds for believing the alleged conduct has occurred?

Where a disclosure is assessed to be a protected disclosure, it is referred to the Protected Disclosure Coordinator. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will determine whether the disclosure is a public interest disclosure.

Where a disclosure is assessed not to be a protected disclosure, the matter does not need to be dealt with under the Act. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will decide how the matter should be responded to in consultation with the CEO.

## **9.2 Is the disclosure a public interest disclosure?**

Where the Protected Disclosure Coordinator has received a disclosure that has been assessed to be a protected disclosure, the Protected Disclosure Coordinator will, in discussion with the CEO, determine whether the disclosure amounts to a public interest disclosure. This assessment will be made within 45 days of the receipt of the disclosure.

In reaching a conclusion as to whether a protected disclosure is a public interest disclosure, the Protected Disclosure Coordinator will consider whether the disclosure **shows, or tends to show**, that the public officer to whom the disclosure relates:

- has engaged, is engaging or proposes to engage in improper conduct in his or her capacity as a public officer; or
- has taken, is taking or proposes to take detrimental action in reprisal for the making of the protected disclosure.

Where the Protected Disclosure Coordinator concludes that the disclosure amounts to a public interest disclosure, she will:

- notify the person who made the disclosure of that conclusion; and
- refer the disclosure to the Ombudsman for formal determination as to whether it is indeed a public interest disclosure.

Where the Protected Disclosure Coordinator concludes that the disclosure is not a public interest disclosure, he or she will:

- notify the person who made the disclosure of that conclusion; and
- advise that person that he or she may request the **Council** to refer the disclosure to the Ombudsman for a formal determination as to whether the disclosure is a public interest disclosure, and that this request must be made within 28 days of the notification.

In either case, the Protected Disclosure Coordinator will make the notification and the referral within 14 days of the conclusion being reached by the public body. Notification to the whistleblower is not necessary where the disclosure has been made anonymously.

## **10. Investigations**

### **10.1 Introduction**

Where the Ombudsman refers a protected disclosure to the **Council** for investigation, the Protected Disclosure Coordinator, in discussion with the CEO, will appoint an investigator, to carry out the investigation.

The objectives of an investigation will be:

- to collate information relating to the allegation as quickly as possible. This may involve taking steps to protect or preserve documents, materials and equipment;
- to consider the information collected and to draw conclusions objectively and impartially;
- to maintain procedural fairness in the treatment of witnesses and the person who is the subject of the disclosure; and
- to make recommendations arising from the conclusions drawn concerning remedial or other appropriate action.

## 10.2 Terms of reference

Before commencing an investigation, the protected disclosure coordinator will draw up terms of reference and obtain authorisation for those terms by the chief executive officer. The terms of reference will set a date by which the investigation report is to be concluded, and will describe the resources available to the investigator to complete the investigation within the time set. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator may approve, if reasonable, an extension of time requested by the investigator. The terms of reference will require the investigator to make regular reports to the Protected Disclosure Coordinator who, in turn, is to keep the Ombudsman informed of general progress.

## 10.3 Investigation plan

The investigator will prepare an investigation plan for approval by the Protected Disclosure Coordinator. The plan will list the issues to be substantiated and describe the avenue of inquiry. It will address the following issues:

- what is being alleged?
- what are the possible findings or offences?
- what are the facts in issue?
- how is the inquiry to be conducted?
- what resources are required?

At the commencement of the investigation, the whistleblower should be:

- notified by the investigator that he or she has been appointed to conduct the investigation;
- asked to clarify any matters; and
- provide any additional material he or she might have.

The investigator will be sensitive to the whistleblower's possible fear of reprisals and will be aware of the statutory protection provided to the whistleblower.

## 10.4 Natural justice

The principles of natural justice will be followed in any investigation of a public interest disclosure. The principles of natural justice concern procedural fairness and ensure a fair decision is reached by an objective decision maker.

Maintaining procedural fairness protects the rights of individuals and enhances public confidence in the process.

The **Council** will have regard to the following issues in ensuring procedural fairness:

- the person who is the subject of the disclosure is entitled to know the allegations made against him or her and must be given the right to respond. (This does not mean the person must be advised of the allegation as soon as the disclosure is received or the investigation has commenced);
- if the investigator is contemplating making a report adverse to the interests of any person, that person should be given the opportunity to put forward further material that may influence the outcome of the report and that person's defence should be fairly set out in the report;
- all relevant parties to a matter should be heard and all submissions should be considered;

- a decision should not be made until all reasonable inquiries have been made;
- the investigator or any decision maker should not have a personal or direct interest in the matter being investigated;
- all proceedings must be carried out fairly and without bias. Care should be taken to exclude perceived bias from the process; and
- the investigator must be impartial in assessing the credibility of the whistleblowers and any witnesses. Where appropriate, conclusions as to credibility should be included in the investigation report.

#### **10.5 Conduct of the investigation**

The investigator will make contemporaneous notes of all discussions and phone calls, and all interviews with witnesses will be taped. All information gathered in an investigation will be stored securely. Interviews will be conducted in private and the investigator will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the whistleblower. Where disclosure of the identity of the whistleblower cannot be avoided, due to the nature of the allegations, the investigator will warn the whistleblower and the Protected Disclosure Coordinator of this probability.

It is in the discretion of the investigator to allow any witness to have legal or other representation or support during an interview. If a witness has a special need for legal representation or support, permission should be granted.

#### **10.6 Referral of an investigation to the Ombudsman**

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator, in discussion with the CEO, will make a decision regarding the referral of an investigation to the Ombudsman where, on the advice of the investigator:

- the investigation is being obstructed by, for example, the non-cooperation of key witnesses; or
- the investigation has revealed conduct that may constitute a criminal offence.

#### **10.7 Reporting requirements**

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will ensure the whistleblower is kept regularly informed concerning the handling of a protected disclosure and an investigation.

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will report to the Ombudsman about the progress of an investigation.

Where the Ombudsman or the whistleblower requests information about the progress of an investigation, that information will be provided within 28 days of the date of the request.

### **11. Action taken after an investigation**

#### **11.1 Investigator's final report**

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will submit a written report of his or her findings to the Protected Disclosure Coordinator. The report will contain:

- the allegation/s;
- an account of all relevant information received and, if the investigator has rejected evidence as being unreliable, the reasons for this opinion being formed;
- the conclusions reached and the basis for them; and
- any recommendations arising from the conclusions.

Where the investigator has found that the conduct disclosed by the whistleblower has occurred, recommendations made by the investigator will include:

- the steps that need to be taken by the **Council** to prevent the conduct from continuing or occurring in the future; and

- any action that should be taken by the **Council** to remedy any harm or loss arising from the conduct. This action may include bringing disciplinary proceedings against the person responsible for the conduct, and referring the matter to an appropriate authority for further consideration.

The report will be accompanied by:

- the transcript or other record of any oral evidence taken, including tape recordings; and
- all documents, statements or other exhibits received by the officer and accepted as evidence during the course of the investigation.

Where the investigator's report is to include an adverse comment against any person, that person will be given the opportunity to respond and his or her defence will be fairly included in the report.

The report will not disclose particulars likely to lead to the identification of the whistleblower.

## **11.2 Action to be taken**

If the Protected Disclosure Coordinator is satisfied that the investigation has found that the disclosed conduct has occurred, he or she will recommend to the Chief Executive Officer the action that must be taken to prevent the conduct from continuing or occurring in the future. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator may also recommend that action be taken to remedy any harm or loss arising from the conduct.

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will provide a written report to the Minister **for Local Government or the Council** (where disclosure relates to employee of the Council), the Ombudsman and the whistleblower setting out the findings of the investigation and any remedial steps taken.

Where the investigation concludes that the disclosed conduct did not occur, the Protected Disclosure Coordinator will report these findings to the Ombudsman and to the whistleblower.

## **12. Managing the welfare of the whistleblower**

### **12.1 Commitment to protecting whistleblowers**

The **Council** is committed to the protection of genuine whistleblowers against detrimental action taken in reprisal for the making of protected disclosures. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator is responsible for ensuring whistleblowers are protected from direct and indirect detrimental action, and that the culture of the workplace is supportive of protected disclosures being made.

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will:

- examine the immediate welfare and protection needs of a whistleblower who has made a disclosure and, where the whistleblower is an employee, seek to foster a supportive work environment;
- advise the whistleblower of the legislative and administrative protection available to him or her;
- listen and respond to any concerns of harassment, intimidation or victimisation in reprisal for making disclosure;
- keep a contemporaneous record of all aspects of the case management of the whistleblower including all contact and follow-up action; and
- ensure the expectations of the whistleblower are realistic.

All employees will be advised that it is an offence for a person to take detrimental action in reprisal for a protected disclosure. The maximum penalty is a fine of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both. The taking of detrimental action in breach of this provision can also be grounds for making a disclosure under the Act and can result in an investigation.

Detrimental action includes:

- causing injury, loss or damage;

- intimidation or harassment; and
- discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to a person's employment, career, profession, trade or business (including the taking of disciplinary action).

### **12.2 Keeping the whistleblower informed**

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will ensure the whistleblower is kept informed of action taken in relation to his or her disclosure, and the time frames that apply. The whistleblower will be informed of the objectives of an investigation, the findings of an investigation, and the steps taken by the **Council** to address any improper conduct that has been found to have occurred. The whistleblower will be given reasons for decisions made by the **Council** in relation to a protected disclosure. All communication with the whistleblower will be in plain English.

### **12.3 Occurrence of detrimental action**

If a whistleblower reports an incident of harassment, discrimination or adverse treatment that would amount to detrimental action taken in reprisal for the making of the disclosure, the Public Disclosure Coordinator will:

- record details of the incident;
- advise the whistleblower of his or her rights under the Act; and
- advise the Chief Executive Officer of the detrimental action.

The taking of detrimental action in reprisal for the making of a disclosure can be an offence against the Act as well as grounds for making a further disclosure. Where such detrimental action is reported, the protected disclosure coordinator will assess the report as a new disclosure under the Act. Where the Protected Disclosure Coordinator is satisfied that the disclosure is a public interest disclosure, he or she will refer it to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman subsequently determines the matter to be a public interest disclosure, the Ombudsman may investigate the matter or refer it to another body for investigation as outlined in the Act.

### **12.4 Whistleblowers implicated in improper conduct**

Where a person who makes a disclosure is implicated in misconduct, the **Council** will handle the disclosure and protect the whistleblower from reprisals in accordance with the Act, the Ombudsman's guidelines and these procedures. The **Council** acknowledges that the act of whistleblowing should not shield whistleblowers from the reasonable consequences flowing from any involvement in improper conduct. Section 17 of the Act specifically provides that a person's liability for his or her own conduct is not affected by the person's disclosure of that conduct under the Act. However, in some circumstances, an admission may be a mitigating factor when considering disciplinary or other action.

The Chief Executive Officer will make the final decision on the advice of the protected disclosure coordinator as to whether disciplinary or other action will be taken against a whistleblower. Where disciplinary or other action relates to conduct that is the subject of the whistleblower's disclosure, the disciplinary or other action will only be taken after the disclosed matter has been appropriately dealt with.

In all cases where disciplinary or other action is being contemplated, the Chief Executive Officer must be satisfied that it has been clearly demonstrated that:

- the intention to proceed with disciplinary action is not causally connected to the making of the disclosure (as opposed to the content of the disclosure or other available information);
- there are good and sufficient grounds that would fully justify action against any non-whistleblower in the same circumstances; and
- there are good and sufficient grounds that justify exercising any discretion to institute disciplinary or other action.

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will thoroughly document the process including recording the reasons why the disciplinary or other action is being taken, and the reasons why the action is not in retribution for the making of the disclosure. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will clearly advise the whistleblower of the proposed action to be taken, and of any mitigating factors that have been taken into account.



### 13. Management of the person against whom a disclosure has been made

The **Council** recognises that employees against whom disclosures are made must also be supported during the handling and investigation of disclosures. The **Council** will take all reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the person who is the subject of the disclosure during the assessment and investigation process. Where investigations do not substantiate disclosures, the fact that the investigation has been carried out, the results of the investigation, and the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure will remain confidential.

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will ensure the person who is the subject of any disclosure investigated by or on behalf of **the Council** is:

- informed as to the substance of the allegations;
- given the opportunity to answer the allegations before a final decision is made;
- informed as to the substance of any adverse comment that may be included in any report arising from the investigation; and has
- his or her defence set out fairly in any report.

Where the allegations in a disclosure have been investigated, and the person who is the subject of the disclosure is aware of the allegations or the fact of the investigation, the protected disclosure coordinator will formally advise the person who is the subject of the disclosure of the outcome of the investigation.

The **Council** will give its full support to a person who is the subject of a disclosure where the allegations contained in a disclosure are clearly wrong or unsubstantiated. If the matter has been publicly disclosed, the Chief Executive Officer of the **Council** will consider any request by that person to issue a statement of support setting out that the allegations were clearly wrong or unsubstantiated.

### 14. Criminal offences

**By making this information available**, the **Council aims to** ensure officers appointed to handle protected disclosures and all other employees are aware of the following offences created by the Act:

- it is an offence for a person to take detrimental action against a person in reprisal for a protected disclosure being made. The Act provides a maximum penalty of a fine of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both;
- it is an offence for a person to divulge information obtained as a result of the handling or investigation of a protected disclosure without legislative authority. The Act provides a maximum penalty of 60 penalty units (\$6,000) or six months imprisonment or both;
- it is an offence for a person to obstruct the Ombudsman in performing his responsibilities under the Act. The Act provides a maximum penalty of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both; and
- it is an offence for a person to knowingly provide false information under the Act with the intention that it be acted on as a disclosed matter. The Act provides a maximum penalty of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both.

### 15. Review

These procedures will be reviewed annually to ensure they meet the objectives of the Act and accord with the Ombudsman's guide.



## **Standard Statements**

## **Introduction**

The following two Standard Statements and explanatory notes for the Annual Report (the Comparison Report) form a special purpose financial report prepared specifically to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003 relating to Standard Statements.

The Standard Statements in this Comparison Report each provide information in relation to an aspect of Council's financial management. They should be read in conjunction with one another to obtain an overall understanding of Council's financial position and management.

The Standard Statements of Financial Performance and Cash Flows for the Annual Report are consistent with Budget and are prepared on bases consistent with the Financial Statements.

This report is a summary of the information found in the Budget and the Financial Report and as such cannot be expected to provide as full an understanding of financial performance as the complete records from which it is derived. The Budget and Financial Report together with their detailed notes should be examined for further detailed information.

**Standard Statement of Financial Performance**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2004**

	<b>Budget 03/04</b>	<b>Variance \$</b>	<b>Variations %</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Actual 03/04</b>
<i>Revenues from ordinary activities</i>					
Revenue Grants	4,440,490	17,810	-		4,458,300
Capital Grants	1,386,230	363,550	26.00	<b>1</b>	1,022,680
Rates	6,350,000	41,741	1.00		6,391,741
User Charges	4,557,200	652,602	14.00	<b>2</b>	5,209,802
Statutory Fees & Fines	250,480	252,321	101.00	<b>3</b>	502,801
Interest Income	122,570	119,502	97.00	<b>4</b>	242,072
Proceeds from Sale of Assets	793,000	277,431	35.00	<b>5</b>	515,569
Vicroads Reimbursements	268,500	161,883	60.00	<b>6</b>	430,383
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>18,168,470</b>	<b>604,878</b>	3.00		<b>18,773,348</b>
<i>Expenses from ordinary activities</i>					
Employee Costs	5,375,525	2,452,983	46.00	<b>7</b>	7,828,508
Plant Hire Charges	819,610	801,178	98.00	<b>8</b>	18,432
Materials & Stocks	1,602,395	88,169	6.00		1,514,226
Contractors & Service Providers	5,675,640	354,512	6.00		5,321,128
Grants, Contributions & Other Costs	579,560	122,756	21.00		702,316
Borrowing Costs	255,480	64,771	25.00	<b>9</b>	320,251
Depreciation	3,652,290	245,275	7.00		3,897,565
Written Down Value Assets Sold	816,000	162,810	20.00	<b>10</b>	653,190
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>18,776,500</b>	<b>1,479,116</b>	8.00		<b>20,255,616</b>
<b>Net surplus (deficit) from operations</b>	<b>(608,030)</b>	<b>874,238</b>	144.00		<b>(1,482,268)</b>
<i>Movements in equity</i>					
Net increase (decrease) in asset revaluation reserves	1,000,000	4,266,221	427.00	<b>11</b>	5,266,221
Increase (decrease) in accumulated surplus on adoption of new Accounting Standard	0	0	-		0
<b>Total changes in equity</b>	<b>391,970</b>	<b>3,391,983</b>	865.00		<b>3,783,953</b>

## Variance Explanation Report

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
1	Capital Grants	\$265k Grant for Library Construction actually invoiced 6/03, being previous period.
2	User Charges	Employment Agency (Related Party) generated \$900k income more than budget. Original Budget contained \$238k of Statutory Fees & Fine accounts.
3	Statutory Fees & Fines	Incorrect classification of original budget accounts as User Charges. Total Adopted Budget of Statutory Charges accounts \$488k. Actual income \$50k.
4	Interest Income	Budget included \$60k of Rates Interest as User Charges. 03/04 Actual includes Rate Interest of \$55k. Interest income higher overall due to extra \$3.2M in cash brought forward to 03/04 for uncompleted works.
5	Proceeds from Sale of Assets	Less Motor Vehicles turned over in \$ terms during the year.
6	VicRoads Reimbursements	Original Budget for Vic Roads works was not accurate.
7	Employee Costs	Employment Agency wages budget was included as Contractors
8	Plant Hire Charges	Original Budget ignored internal charges. Actual Plant expenses \$762k.
9	Borrowing Costs	Budget included bank loans only, without Vision Super Liability.
10	Written Down Value of Assets Sold	Motor Vehicles down \$115k on budget due to less vehicles in \$ terms being turned over than budgeted.
11	Net increase (Decrease) in asset revaluation reserves	General Revaluation saw many property prices increase greater than anticipated.

**Standard Statement of Cash Flows**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2004**

	<b>Budget 03/04</b>	<b>Variance \$</b>	<b>Variations %</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Actual 03/04</b>
<b><i>Cash Flows from Operating Activities</i></b>					
Receipts from customers	11,538,180	1,492,191	13.00		13,030,371
Payments to suppliers	(14,308,210)	2,687,775	(19.00)	<b>1</b>	(16,995,985)
Net cash inflow (outflow) from operating activities	(2,770,030)	4,179,966	(151.00)		(3,965,614)
<b><i>Cash Flows from Investing Activities</i></b>					
Interest Received	122,570	119,502	97.00	<b>2</b>	242,072
Government Grants	5,826,720	167,794	3.00		5,658,926
<b>Net cash inflow from operating activities</b>	<b>3,179,260</b>	<b>1,243,876</b>	<b>39.00</b>		<b>1,935,384</b>
<b><i>Cash Flows from Investing Activities</i></b>					
Proceeds from sale of assets	682,000	228,120	33.00	<b>3</b>	453,880
Payments for property, plant & equipment	(4,467,690)	737,109	16.00	<b>4</b>	(5,204,799)
<b>Net cash outflow from investing activities</b>	<b>(3,785,690)</b>	<b>965,229</b>	<b>(25.00)</b>		<b>(4,750,919)</b>
<b><i>Cash Flows from Financing Activities</i></b>					
Proceeds from Borrowings	-	-	-		-
Receipt/Payment of Trust Monies	-	(29,689.00)			29,689
Repayment of Borrowings	(646,430)	1,082	-		(647,512)
<b>Net cash outflow from financing activities</b>	<b>(646,430)</b>	<b>(28,607)</b>	<b>4.00</b>		<b>(617,823)</b>
<b>Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash</b>	<b>(1,252,860)</b>	<b>2,180,498</b>	<b>174.00</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>(3,433,358)</b>
Cash at beginning of the financial period	2,791,016	3,251,868	117.00	<b>6</b>	6,042,884
<b><i>Cash at the end of year</i></b>	<b>1,538,156</b>	<b>1,071,370</b>	<b>70.00</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2,609,526</b>
<b><i>Reconciliation of Operating Result and Net Cash Flows from Operating Activities</i></b>					
<b><i>For the year ending 30 June</i></b>					
<b>Net surplus (deficit) from operations</b>	(608,030)	874,238	144.00		(1,482,268)
Depreciation	3,652,290	245,275	7.00		3,897,565
Profit (Loss) on sale of assets	(23,000)	(160,621)	(698.00)	<b>8</b>	137,621
Net movement in current assets & liabilities	158,000	775,534	491.00		(617,534)
<b><i>Net cash inflow from operating Activities</i></b>	<b>3,179,260</b>	<b>1,243,876</b>	<b>39.00</b>		<b>1,935,384</b>

## Variance Explanation Report

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
1	Payments to Suppliers	Combination of additional wages to Employment Agency staff due to increased staff; Capital Expenditure carried over to 2003/04 financial year
2	Interest Received	Budget included \$60k of Rates Interest as User Charges. Actual Rate Interest, of \$55k, included as Interest. Interest income higher overall due to extra \$3.2M in cash brought forward to 03/04 for uncompleted works. See Ref. 6
3	Proceeds from Sale of Assets	Less Motor Vehicles turned over in \$ terms during the year.
4	Payments for property, plant & equipment	Library development costs were higher than budgeted due to problems encountered by builder with condition of existing structure. New Halford Street Office over budget due to unexpected problems when refitting Old Hospital
5	Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash	Cash decrease was \$2M greater than budget, of which \$1.3M can be attributable to Capital Works carried over from 2002/03 financial year and being paid during 03/04 year (see Ref 6)
6	Cash at beginning of the financial year	A large amount of uncompleted works at 6/03 was carried over at \$1.3M. This was not anticipated at time the budget was adopted.
7	Cash at the end of the year	Despite cash outflows being greater than budget during the year (see Ref 5), the 02/03 carry forward into 03/04 was greater than outflows therefore against budget, Cash at the end of the year was still greater.
8	Profit (Loss) on sale of assets	Sale of two industrial blocks of land was not included in adopted budget.

## **Notes to the Standard Statements**

### **Note 1 Basis of preparation of Standard Statements.**

Council is required to prepare and include audited Standard Statements for the first time this financial year within its Annual Report. A Standard Statement of Financial Performance and a Standard Statement of Cash Flows, together with explanatory notes are required.

These statements and supporting notes form a special purpose financial report prepared to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 1989 and Local Government (Finance and Reporting) Regulations 2004. The Standard Statements have been prepared on accounting basis consistent with those used for the General Purpose Financial Statements and the Budget. The results reported in these statements are consistent with those reported in the General Purpose Financial Statements.

The Standard Statements are not a substitute for the General Purpose Financial Statements, which are included in the Annual report. They have been prepared in accordance with all Australian Accounting Standards and other authoritative professional pronouncements, as well as the Local Government (Finance and Reporting) Regulations 2004.

The Standard Statements compare council's financial plan, expressed through its budget, with actual performance. The Local Government Act 1989 requires explanation of any material variances. The Council applies materiality based on the requirements of AAS 5 Materiality. The budget figures included in the Statements are those adopted by Council on 16 June 2003. The budget was based on assumptions that were relevant at the time of adoption of the budget. The Council set guidelines and parameters for revenue and expense targets in this budget in order to meet council's business plan and financial performance targets for both the short and long term. The budget did not reflect any changes to equity resulting from asset revaluations, as their impacts were not considered predictable.

Detailed information on the actual results is contained in the General Purpose Financial Statements of the Annual Report. The detailed budget can be obtained by contacting council or through the council's website. The Standard Statements must be read with reference to these documents.



**MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL**

**Certification of the Standard Statement**

In my opinion the accompanying standard statements have been prepared on accounting bases consistent with the financial statements and in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989 and the Local Government (Finance and Reporting) Regulations 2004.



**ACTING PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTING OFFICER**

**David L. Thomas, CPA B.Comm. AAIBF(Snr)**

Dated: 20 September 2004, Castlemaine

In our opinion, the accompanying standard statement of the Mt Alexander Shire Council in respect of the 2003/2004 financial year is presented fairly in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989.

In our opinion the accompanying standard statements have been prepared on accounting bases consistent with the financial statements and in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989 and the Local Government (Finance and Reporting) Regulations 2004.

As at the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render any particulars in the standard statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the Council on 10 September, 2004 to certify the standard statements in their final form.

**COUNCILLOR**



Dated: 20 September 2004, Castlemaine

**COUNCILLOR**



Dated: 20 September 2004, Castlemaine



**ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**Sandra J. Wilson, CPA B.Bus.**

Dated: 20 September 2004, Castlemaine



AUDITOR GENERAL  
VICTORIA

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT**

**To the responsible Ministers and the Councillors of Mount Alexander Shire Council**

**Matters relating to the electronic presentation of the Audited Financial Report**

This audit report relates to the financial report of Mount Alexander Shire Council for the financial year ended 30 June 2004 included on Mount Alexander Shire Council's web site. The Councillors of Mount Alexander Shire Council are responsible for the integrity of Mount Alexander Shire Council's web site. I have not been engaged to report on the integrity of Mount Alexander Shire Council's web site. The audit report refers only to the statements named below. An opinion is not provided on any other information which may have been hyperlinked to or from these statements. If users of this report are concerned with the inherent risks arising from electronic data communications they are advised to refer to the hard copy of the audited financial report to confirm the information included in the audited financial report presented on this web site.

**Audit Scope**

The accompanying financial report and standard statements of Mount Alexander Shire Council for the financial year ended 30 June 2004 have been audited. The financial report comprises a statement of financial performance, statement of financial position, statement of changes in equity, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements. The standard statements comprise a standard statement of financial performance and standard statement of cash flows.

The Councillors are responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial report and the standard statements and the information they contain. An independent audit of the financial report and standard statements has been carried out in order to express an opinion on them to the responsible Ministers and the Councillors as required by the *Audit Act 1994*.

Each audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial report and standard statements are free of material misstatement. The audit procedures included an examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report and standard statements, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects:

- (i) the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia and the financial reporting requirements of the *Local Government Act 1989*, so as to present a view which is consistent with my understanding of the Council's financial position, financial performance and its cash flows; and
- (ii) the standard statements are presented fairly, consistent with the basis of preparation described in note 1, comply with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1989* and the "actual" amounts are correctly extracted from the financial report. While the standard statements have to be prepared on a basis consistent with the financial report they are not required to meet all of the presentation requirements of Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.


The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

**Audit Opinions**

In my opinion:

- (i) the financial report presents fairly in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements in Australia and the financial reporting requirements of the *Local Government Act 1989*, the financial position of Mount Alexander Shire Council as at 30 June 2004, its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended; and
- (ii) the standard statements for the year ended 30 June 2004 are presented fairly in accordance with the basis of preparation as described in note 1 to the statements and comply with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

MELBOURNE  
20 September 2004

  
J.W. CAMERON  
Auditor-General

Victorian Auditor-General's Office Level 34, 140 William Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000  
Telephone (03) 8601 7000 Facsimile (03) 8601 7010 Email comments@audit.vic.gov.au Website www.audit.vic.gov.au

*Auditing in the Public Interest*